# DEFINITIONS OF WRITTEN LITERACY AT INDIANA VOCATIONAL TECHNICAL COLLEGE

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> Literacy is assuming a credential status. Credentials themselves lose value, but the credential, or the literacy presumed by the credential, is not the cause of opportunity. Opportunity is merely changing its face (Stuckey 58).

As I have researched my classroom in the context of the institution it exists in, I have frequently come back to the theme of this quotation. The students in the classroom are reaching for the credential that a passing grade offers them first, and the credential of a degree second. The college itself is reaching for the credential that will "certify" it as a transfer institution, and a part of that certification process is the credentialing of faculty to at least the Master's level. I have concluded that a certain level of literacy is being assumed by these various credentials, and many of the individuals I have studied as a part of this project seem to see the credential as the proof of the literacy. The various credentials being aspired to offer to those individuals both inside and outside the institution the proof of a certain level of literacy.

Currently both the institution, Indiana Vocational Technical College, Ivy Tech, and the program, Basic Skills Advancement, BSA, I teach for are undergoing significant changes. As a result of these changes, written literacy as it is and has been defined by the college is changing. I am interested in seeing how closely the definitions of the college correspond to the definitions of the students. Just as importantly, however, exploring my own definitions

of written literacy has forced me to examine how my definitions both conform with and conflict with the students' and the institution's definitions.

While I believe as a teacher, that it is always important for me to evaluate my own classroom effectiveness by listening to what students have to say, I think that it is especially crucial during a time of change. Equally important to me is to do my utmost to help the students who enroll in my classes to achieve the goals that they have set for themselves. It is impossible for me to help them to gain the written literacies they say they need, want, and desire, if I do not know what those literacies are. The way I chose to define their literacies was to ask them what those literacies are. In addition though to wanting the students to achieve the goals that they have set for themselves, I also want to help them to reach the goals that I have set for them. Goals that I think complement their own. During the spring semester of 1992, I observed the institution, myself, and the students enrolled in BSA 024 Introduction to English I in the context of change.

My observations of the institution as it begins undergoing the review and reform process to prepare it for transfer of credit is a major focus of this research. Ivy Tech is currently the focus of major curriculum reform (the word that is emphasized by our central office rather than review) as a result of increased emphasis on general education and the recent legislative mandate which was

designed to pave the way for the transfer of credit of ten core courses between Indiana's seven post-secondary institutions. As the college is moving toward this emphasis on general education, the BSA program, which is funded through federal legislation, the Carl Perkins Act of 1984, and must therefore follow its guidelines, is facing its own new guidelines. The revised guidelines call for a greater emphasis in relating the "basic skills" to the technology the student is studying. These somewhat seemingly conflicting mandates occurring at the same time, are causing a great deal of confusion from the college perspective as to what written literacy is or should be for an Ivy Tech student.

The writing classroom is the obvious stage where much of this tension between the various forces defining written literacy for the Ivy Tech student is played out. The interactions between the students and the teacher in the classroom are what I have used for the second major focus of my observations. These observations and my interpretations of them are the foundation for my classroom research. Classroom research remains a research approach that while still not accepted by many (Knoblauch "Knowing" 20-21), is beginning to gain acceptance because of the realization that to use the same methods to discover what happens to students in the classroom as we do to to discover what happens to "strains of wheat or farm animals" (Martin 21) is inappropriate. Human beings do not act as we expect

regardless of how diligently a researcher tries to set up a "controlled" environment. As Britton states, "We come, paradoxically to expect the unexpected of people" (14). If true research is conducted not to prove something, but rather to discover (Britton 14), then the only way to discover the literacy of Ivy Tech's students and the desired literacies of those students is through conducting classroom research.

In addition, my own experiences as a writer and a teacher are an important part of this research, because I am changing the classroom merely by being a part of it. I agree with those who propose that a writing teacher's own experiences as a writer should be used as a resource in the writing classroom. My experiences as a writer and a teacher influence what I teach and how I teach it (Ponsot 38). I have struggled throughout this research to step back from my role as a teacher and to accurately observe the classroom. My perceptions as I have recorded them then are observations that I believe other teachers would recognize. They are as "accurate" as I am capable of making them.

I have confirmed that there is no single definition of written literacy at Ivy Tech or any where else (Knoblauch "Literacy" 79), and that I have difficulty myself trying to define what I think literacy is for me as an individual. Knoblauch emphasizes that literacy is always "literacy for something" (75). (See Table 1 for Knoblauch's definitions.) Knoblauch's definitions provided an appropiate framework to

classify literacy at Ivy Tech. Literacy in our society grants one a certain amount of power or authority. I think that one who is literate demonstrates a certain amount of control over written language. The issues have become for me--Why do these students want that control? and What purposes do they think that control will serve? I have discovered that many of the individuals and the institution itself is currently extremely confused about the purposes of and what they want to accomplish with their literacies. Literacy at Ivy Tech, as in other places, is not a clearly definable concept; there are many aspects of the definition. It is impossible to develop a single definition that encompasses the diversity of written literacy to the individuals and the institution.

There are, however, three primary definitions that emerge. One is the definition of the institution itself which is certainly not cohesive depending upon the administrator or teacher doing the defining, but the institution's definition certainly resounds with specific themes. The second major set of definitions I explored was my own. Third, I attempted to define, based on student writings, conferences, and classroom activities, how this particular group of students defined written literacy.

The institution is starting to promote not different literacies than it has in the past, but additional ones. My own stages of comfortableness and uncomfortableness with my own literacies and with the kinds of written literacy that I

am being asked to promote does not add clarity to the definition. The students are all individuals and while certain trends seem to be apparent, each one does have his/her own definition. Literacy certainly does not mean the same thing to all of them, nor does it mean the same to some of them as individuals at different times throughout the semester. Even as individuals they sometimes have competing, conflicting agendas. Sometimes their agendas appear to match their words, and at other times they do not.

Knoblauch's Definitions of Literacy

Literacy is always literacy for something.

What literacy may be used for includes the following:

| | |
|---|---|
| Functional | Literacy for economic or material gain. Literacy for daily life. Literacy that is tied to concrete needs. Safeguards socioeconomic status quo. |
| Cultural | Literacy to maintain cultural values, that includes an awareness of cultural heritage (teaching the canon). Literacy as a source of social cohesion. Literacy to preserve and advance the world as it is. |
| Personal-growth/ Expressivist | Literacy expresses the power of individual imagination. Progress of individual learner is paramount. No concern with restructuring of institutions. |
| Critical | Radical literacy. Critical consciousness. Those with authority dominate those without it. Literacy is seem as a means to power political enfranchisement. At stake is the eventual restructuring of the entire class system. |

Table 1.

## INSTITUTIONAL PERSPECTIVES

### Ivy Tech--The History

Ivy Tech was started as a state institution in 1963 with a $50,000 two-year budget. The charge to the fledgling institution was to provide the kind of education not being offered by the state's four-year colleges, and to provide it to the people who were not currently being served by those same four year institutions. The clientele to be served were those:

1. Students who had not finished high school,
2. Students who had finished high school, but were not interested in an academic degree but were more interested in some vocational-type instruction of a practical nature,
3. Students who had dropped out of college and were interested in some specific vocational study of a practical kind,
4. People who had finished college but would like to supplement their education with some vocational training (Gaus 3).

Ivy Tech's original mandate was to fill the "gap" left by the state's colleges and universities and to avoid duplication of course offerings (emphasis mine) (Gaus 24). Region 02, South Bend, received its charter in September 1967 and was commissioned to provide post-secondary vocational technical education for St. Joseph, Elkhart, Marshall and Kosciusko counties (Gaus 55). Currently Region 02 offers courses in both Elkhart and Warsaw in addition to

the South Bend campus.

Ivy Tech was founded as an open door institution. It was felt that it could more effectively serve its prescribed clientele if students were not asked to meet any kind of entrance requirements. Current college policy states that any Indiana resident over the age of 16 is entitled to enroll in the college. Open admissions institutions generally pride themselves on their democratic principles--they are working to provide equal educational access regardless of prior educational experience. Certainly this goal is an appropriate one, but unfortunately, it is not always an effective one. To be effective the institution and the student must both understand what is expected of them. The institution must provide "suitable guidance, support services, and instruction" (American Council on Education 36); and the students must be equally willing to "promise a good faith effort in maintaining satisfactory progress toward his or her educational goals" (American Council on Education 36).

One problem is that frequently those who could most benefit from the open door policy do not have the educational savvy to make the most of the opportunity. Open door colleges attract many first-generation college students from disadvantaged and minority backgrounds who do not realize that they have implicitly agreed to these terms. Laura Rendon in "Eyes on the Prize: Students of Color and the Bachelor's Degree" argues that often these disadvantaged

and minority students are poor consumers of higher education. She argues that these students are often not taken seriously because they seem to take classes randomly and without appearing to have an overall plan (5), a behavior that I have observed often at Ivy Tech. Obviously, if either the students or the institution does not uphold its end of the bargain, attrition rates soar and the democratic principle remains just an ideal rather than a reality.

It soon became evident that if Ivy Tech was going to maintain the open door policy that it had been founded on, that it had to develop the kinds of institutional support that would first educate students about the educational system, and then provide them with the strategies to succeed within that system. Various regions began to offer classes that would help unprepared and underprepared students to acquire the various competencies they would need to move into the technical programs. The emphasis on literacy in these programs was begun as one that Knoblauch would define as functionalist literacy (76). The literacy that the college was offering to its students was pragmatic. A literacy that assumed "that the ultimate value of language lies in its utilitarian capacity to pass information back and forth for economic or other material gain" (Knoblauch "Literacy" 76). Another key point to functionalist literacy, as defined by Knoblauch, is that this is a literacy that is designed, not to change the economic status

quo, but to maintain it (76).

In 1985, the college qualified for funding through federal legislation that was named after the person primarily responsible for its passage, former Kentucky Representative Carl Perkins. The Carl Perkins Vocational Education Act stated in essence that any secondary or post-secondary school that offered vocational and technical programs must provide to its students the means to be successful in those programs. The act identifies students at risk as falling into three categories. Any academically and economically disadvantaged student is eligible to receive support services through Carl Perkins funding. The third category of students who are eligible for Carl Perkins support include those students with limited English proficiency, migrants, dropouts, and potential dropouts (Services for Vocational and Technical Education, Students Who are Disadvantaged, Draft 1990-1991).

Carl Perkins funding offered the college the opportunity to make the pre-technical program a vital part of the open door philosophy. One of the most significant goals of the program is to promote student retention and thereby keep the open door from becoming a revolving door. While Ivy Tech will admit students with various levels of literacy, the college has learned that students who have not accomplished certain literacies are frequently not successful students. Students coming into Ivy Tech's open door must have more than the literacy to survive daily life.

If a student applies to the college who is a non-writer, one who can perhaps write only his or her name, by law Ivy Tech has to admit that student. There have been students in the past who have applied to the college who possessed only these minimal literacies. These students were not good candidates to be successful at the college and were usually encouraged by counselors and teachers to contact the St. Joseph County Literacy Council or the South Bend Community Schools Adult Basic Education program and return to Ivy Tech after completing these programs.

Dr. Carl Lutz, chancellor of Region 02, South Bend, emphasizes that the college has moved from offering primarily vocational programs to offering primarily technical ones. When he first became chancellor, approximately 34 percent of Ivy Tech's students were enrolled in vocational programs. Now only 4 percent of those individuals enrolling in the college enroll in the vocational programs (Bowman C1). The new emphasis on technical programs has led to a need for more reading and writing in the technical classroom, as well as higher level mathematics and some computer knowledge for almost every technology. I do not think the emphasis on the technologies by itself led the college to re-think the kinds of literacies that are appropriate for its students. The emphasis on the technologies still demanded a functional literacy, one for economic gain. It is just that the level of functioning was raised. The amount of and the difficulty

of the reading and writing that was required of an auto mechanic several years ago in comparison to the amount of and difficulty of the reading and writing that is required of an auto mechanic today has changed dramatically. In addition, the kinds of reading and writing that is required of a machine toolist is substantially different from what is required of an electronics technician. It is still a literacy for a job, but the jobs are different.

It is extremely important then that Ivy Tech accurately identify those individuals who would benefit from and perhaps fail without the interventions of the BSA program. Incoming students are recommended for BSA courses as the result of a placement test. All new students to the college are asked (but not required) to take the test. The test currently being used was developed by the College Board and Educational Testing Services and is called Assessment and Placement Services for Community Colleges (APS). The test has four multiple choice timed sections which are supposed to determine student proficiency in reading, writing, mathematics (basic arithmetic), and algebra. The "writing" portion of the test is forty multiple choice questions. For twenty of the questions, the students must try to determine what is wrong, if anything, with the sentence that they are reading. For the next set of twenty questions, the students must decide which of four choices is the best way to express an idea. Region 02, along with several other regions, has also added a writing sample to the test which is currently

being used by all but the graphic design, interior design, and commercial video programs. The writing sample is not scored by the assessment coordinator or the English faculty, but rather is just given to the program advisor along with the students' other test scores. As a result of the move to transfer of credit between institutions, there is also a movement to reduce the amount of re-testing that is being done to the students who do elect to earn a Bachelor's degree. There is an effort underway to find a testing instrument that could be correlated with the Scholastic Aptitude Test. Since the current test cannot be easily correlated, it is currently under review.

Written Literacy at Ivy Tech--Present and Future

I think that it would be extremely difficult if not impossible to discuss what written literacy is at Ivy Tech without discussing the current focus on transfer of credit. If Ivy Tech is going to offer writing courses that are truly comparable to writing courses at the state's four-year institutions, it is necessary to redefine what is appropriately taught in those courses. As stated above, written literacy at Ivy Tech in the past has been a literacy that focused on preparing individuals for the world of work. Now, the college is saying that it also wants to prepare individuals to be contributing members of the society in which they live (Draft of New Mission Statement). I would

classify this new literacy as Knoblauch's cultural literacy.

Knoblauch states that cultural literacy is a literacy that moves beyond the "mechanistic conception of basic skills and toward the affirmation of stable and timeless values inscribed in verbal memory. . ." (77). I would classify this new literacy as cultural rather than critical, because the main thrust of critical literacy is a literacy that encourages its practitioners to question and work to change the status quo (Knoblauch "Literacy" 79). Ivy Tech has stated it wants to produce graduates who will be contributing members to the society in which they live--not graduates who will question that society and take steps to perhaps change it. It is also important not to confuse critical literacy with what many would call critical thinking. Critical thinking is being able to analyze a situation and solve the various problems that situation presents. Problem-solving is emphasized at Ivy Tech, critical literacy, using Knoblauch's definitions is not.

The new literacy, cultural, that the college has adopted, is one that it is hoping to prove to the four-year colleges and universities in the state through standardized testing. The college has put forth an initiative that states that various regions will begin piloting CAAPS testing during the fall 1992 semester. The CAAPS test is designed to determine competencies in the area of general education. Eventually all general education courses at all regions throughout the state will be using CAAPS testing at

the conclusion of a student's general education coursework (Assessment Task Force Recommendations, July 1992). Hence the college will have an additional "credential" to prove its students' literacy.

Critical literacy, on the other hand, based on my own experiences as a student is the literacy that many four-year institutions would say that they promote, even if the institutional setting itself seems to make critical literacy difficult to achieve. Critical literacy is defined by Knoblauch as a potentially dangerous literacy (79). It is a literacy which promotes the ability to use language as a means to political power, a way to seek "political enfranchisement" not just economic gain or cultural status quo. Even though many people seek a four-year college education to secure a job or the entrance into a career, the university itself, in my experiences as an undergraduate pursuing a degree in English literature and as a graduate student, is and was concerned with much more than my employability upon graduation.

The English department did not appear to be very concerned with whether or not I was going to be employed upon graduation. As I look at my undergraduate education in retrospect, I see that the major focus of that education was to learn how to analyze and interpret, and perhaps most importantly to question. Certainly as a person who majored in English literature, I was expected to obtain a certain amount of cultural literacy--Beowulf, Chaucer, and

Shakespeare were standard fare. More importantly, perhaps though, was the continual questioning as to whether just teaching Beowulf, Chaucer, and Shakespeare was enough. At the time I was working on my undergraduate degree there was beginning to be a great deal of questioning and concern about reading literary figures who were women and who came from different ethnic backgrounds. At the same time, in the composition classes I was enrolled in there was beginning to be a movement away from the concept of all good writing is correct writing. In English methods classes I studied how to teach writing using a process approach, rather than grammar drill and skill. I was being shown that the system of teaching that had been prescribed to for many years, and was still prescribed to by some, was ineffective, and I could not make adjustments within the system, I had to approach my teaching from a totally different perspective if I was going to be effective.

I think that it was expected that I would take the analytical and interpretive skills that this continual questioning developed and apply them to the life that I lived, which would hopefully include some kind of employment. The employment was the secondary focus though, and the courses that I was required to take to obtain my degree were not functional (in Knoblauch's sense of the word) beyond the fact that I could perhaps teach the same things to someone else. From my experiences then, the university promotes primarily critical literacy.

Jonathan Kozol in Illiterate America, states that this critical literacy is the kind of literacy that must be achieved before we can claim to have a truly literate society. Kozol states that the literacy war must be staged as a moral and political battle, a war that must be won to "liberate" not to make people "functional for jobs and good consumers" (91-92). According to Knoblauch, if critical literacy is promoted, ultimately what is put at stake is the eventual restructuring of the class structure of American life. It is important to me to acknowledge that Ivy Tech is changing and adding to its definition of written literacy, primarily as a result of the impetus toward transfer of credit, but it seems to me that its changed definition still does not coincide with the definition of written literacy that is promoted by those institutions with which Ivy Tech is trying to work out articulation agreements.

Why and how did Indiana embark on this journey toward transfer of credit? Credit transfer is increasingly being seen by those in Indiana as a way to not only help students meet their educational goals, but also as a way to increase educational levels to make the state and then ultimately the country more "competitive." Simultaneously, the Indiana legislature has discovered that by allowing credits to transfer between the various state institutions, the state will save a substantial amount of money.

An individual who attends classes at Ivy Tech (as with any Indiana public institution) has a portion of the cost of

his education paid for by the state of Indiana. If that same person decides at some later date to attend a four-year public institution and enrolls in similar courses there, not only has the individual had to pay tuition twice, but so has the state. One estimate, that was shared at a meeting of Ivy Tech's general education divisional chairs, was that by promoting transfer of credit between Ivy Tech and the four-year institutions, the state could save approximately five million dollars a year.

One of the first attempts to deal with the cost of the lack of credit transfer was the birth of the Associate's of Science (not Associate's of Applied Science that Ivy Tech usually offers) articulation agreements. There are currently eleven Associate of Science/articulation programs in Indiana between Ivy Tech and other institutions (Commission for Higher Education, Agenda 213). Basically, the articulation agreements state that the receiving institution agrees to grant junior standing to any individuals who graduate from Ivy Tech with one of these degrees. Region 02 has the largest number of associate degree articulation programs with three:

| Degree | Receiving institution |
|---|---|
| A.S. Accounting | Bethel |
| A.S. Marketing | Bethel |
| A.S. Architectural Drafting | Tri-State |

All three of these agreements, and many of the others throughout the state as well, have been forged by Ivy Tech

and the state's private universities. The original goal of the Associate of Science/articulation agreements was to provide a way to save the state from having to pay a student's tuition twice. This goal does not seem to have been realized, at least on a local level since the private institutions do not access state funding in the same way that the public institutions do. I think it is also important to consider the fact that in recent years both Bethel and Tri-State have faced numerous financial difficulties as institutions and appear to be welcoming all students who arrive on their thresholds.

The only indication that the goal of the program as a money-saving device is being realized is the articulation agreement that Ivy Tech and IUSB have conferred about for the Associate's of Science Nursing degree. Currently Ivy Tech students in the A.S. nursing program take their general education classes at IUSB. Two of the students currently enrolled in basic writing have stated their degree goal as the A.S. degree which means that they will be taking general education courses on the IUSB campus. As of fall 1989, none of the students who had enrolled in these A.S. nursing articulation programs had continued on to pursue a bachelor's degree.

These cooperative programs were designed as one way to resolve the issue of transfer. In the case of the private institutions, they have agreed to accept the Ivy Tech credits for those students who have graduated from these

programs. In the case of IUSB, the transfer of general education courses should not be an issue if these students do decide to pursue a bachelor's degree in nursing, because the students have already taken the potential transfer courses on the IUSB campus with IUSB faculty. Since the agreement has still not been officially finalized and no students have attempted to transfer, however, it remains to be seen how IUSB will handle the students' nursing credits.

Actual transfer of credit became an issue for the Indiana General Assembly as early as six years ago, when it decided not to legislate transfer but to allow some time for the state's post-secondary institutions to begin working out articulation agreements. A report on the various agreements was to be supplied to the General Assembly by December 1, 1989. "If the report indicates that little or no progress has been made towards rectifying the problem [credit transfer], the General Assembly should explore a legislative solution to it" (Commission for Higher Education, Agenda 211). Because few agreements had been worked out by 1992, the legislature at that point decided to mandate that credits <u>could</u> be transferred. The fact that they worded the legislation in this way illustrates just how political this issue is in Indiana. I could make the argument that credit always <u>could</u> be transferred, but the reality in the past has always been <u>would</u> it be--no. The question for the future then is <u>will</u> it be?

Indiana is not the only state that is currently

struggling with this issue, although it is the only state that I found in my research that has actually taken the dramatic step of developing legislation that promotes transfer. In 1989, Senate Concurrent Resolution 18, which urged all state universities to enter into articulation agreements was the first attempt of the legislature to encourage transfer of credit. SCR 18 also asked the Commission for Higher Education to conduct a study to determine not only compliance with the directive but also how many students were actually attempting to further their educations beyond Ivy Tech (Commission for Higher Education, Agenda 7). Transfer of credit nationally is being promoted as a way for the country to achieve its educational goals (American Council on Education 4), and it has become enough of an issue nationally, that the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges (AACJC) named 1991, "The Year of the Transfer." A situation currently exits in Indiana to make the discussion and implementation of transfer of credit a reality.

The study the Commission for Higher Education (CHE) conducted was an attempt to determine how many students from Ivy Tech were pursuing additional degrees at Indiana's public four year institutions and what those students cost the state in duplicated effort. Based on the study, it was estimated that 1,600 Ivy Tech continuers, as they were called rather that transfer students, because so few actually transferred credit, were enrolled in public four-

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year institutions in 1988 (Commission for Higher Education, Agenda 186). This survey once again brought to the forefront the issue of whether or not Indiana is trying to use Ivy Tech as the foundation for a community college.

The community college argument has consistently surfaced during Ivy Tech's existence. For example, in 1972, then college president, Dr. Harry McGuff, resigned his presidency because he disagreed with the State Board of Trustees concerning which direction the college should pursue. Dr. McGuff thought "Ivy Tech needed to expand its academic curriculum." The Board was fearful "that he might be leading the college in a direction contrary to their legislative mandate, which called for only such academic offerings as were necessary to support vocational-technical education" (Gaus 25). The recent legislative mandates have continued the argument of how many and what kinds of academic offerings it is appropriate for Ivy Tech to offer as a technical college. An argument that must be looked at in light of the primary literacy that an academic college promotes--critical and the primary literacy that a technical college promotes--functional.

The CHE study was conducted by identifying 2,807 students who were enrolled at Ivy Tech in 1984-85 and who subsequently enrolled at a four-year public institution in the state (Commission for Higher Education, Agenda 153). The study produced a variety of information concerning the students who have attended both Ivy Tech and a public four

year post-secondary institution in Indiana. There were 27,692 students enrolled at Ivy Tech fall term 1985 and 2,807 of those individuals subsequently did enroll at another institution in Indiana for a total of 10.1 percent. A random sample of 338 students of the 2,807 were studied (margin of error +/- 5 percent) in depth.

Over half of the students who continued on to other public institutions took fewer than 14 semester credit hours at Ivy Tech. This indicates that students at Ivy Tech are consistent with their national counterparts in that they might transfer at any time after enrollment in the two-year college (American Council on Education 27) (Much of the national data I will be citing is based on community colleges as there are so few two year technical colleges which have been the focus of transfer of credit studies.) It is important to seriously consider whether an individual who has taken fewer than fourteen credit hours at Ivy Tech can be considered a "continuer" if that individual elects to go on to a four-year institution. Certainly that individual has attended Ivy Tech, but I think that a more accurate interpretation of the data would indicate that approximately 5 percent of those students who continued on were true "continuers," because they took a minimal number of credits at both Ivy Tech and the four-year institution.

In a study conducted by the AACJC, it was discovered that transfer rates ranged from 2 percent to 78 percent depending on the reporting mechanism used (Jones 6). One

thing that should not be used to determine student transfer rate according to the study is student intentions. Rendon ("Eyes on the Prize") argues, however, that those researchers who say that we cannot look at student intentions as a gauge of transfer of credit are only partially correct. Educators can trust that these students do know their intentions, but they may not know how to make those intentions become reality. The students who say they intend to transfer may need additional help in clarifying their goals. They may need to have the implicit bargain referred to earlier made into an explicit bargain (5). These individuals need to understand that they are capable of achieving their goals and what steps they must take to do so.

Who does the AACJC say then we should define as the transfer student? It should first be only those students who have completed a minimum number of college credits at the two year institution (Jones 6). Some research even indicates that only those who have obtained the Associate's degree should be considered true transfer students because they are the only individuals who have been "certified" by the two year institution (American Council on Education 28), or as my introductory quotation would indicate they have been credentialed. Research has also indicated that those students with an Associate's degree out perform those who have not obtained one in both persistence and baccalaureate attainment (American Council on Education 28). This

research adds further justification to the argument that these students' success at the two-year institution is an indicator of their success at the four-year institution.

On the other hand, other research indicates that to include only those who have graduated with an Associate's degree would significantly skew the transfer rate to the low end. The CHE study found that 63 percent of the Ivy Tech continuers had earned a degree or certificate at Ivy Tech. 48 percent had earned their Associate's and 15 percent a technical certificate (Commission for Higher Education, Agenda 76). Students earning a technical certificate at Ivy Tech have usually only completed one year of coursework. Technical certificates are occupationally specific with a minimal number of credits taken in the general education area. Only 11 percent of the infrequent students had earned an Ivy Tech certificate or degree (Commission for Higher Education, Agenda 175). The study found that 103 of the 338 students studied in depth had passed 13 credit hours or more at Ivy Tech.

The AACJC has developed a formula for determining transfer rate. "Transfer rate can be defined as all students entering the two-year college in a given year who have no prior college experience and who complete at least 12 college credit units, divided into the number of that group who take <u>one or more</u> (emphasis mine) classes at a university within four years" (Jones 3). The AACJC also points out that its formula may lead to an "undercount since

many students don't transfer within four years, and they often don't transfer to other local institutions which makes tracking them difficult if not impossible" (Jones 11).

Obviously then those individuals who have earned less than 14 credit hours at Ivy Tech truly should not be considered transfer students. The CHE's study indicates that about half of the 10.1 percent of the students who were enrolled at Ivy Tech and subsequently at a four-year public institution would meet these national criteria of transfer students (Commission for Higher Education, Agenda 142). The financial implications of those continuers is significant though. The number of credit hours taken by these continuers totaled 154,429 hours at a cost to students of $7.9 million and at a cost to the state of $15.7 million. The budgetary repercussions of lack of credit transfer then became a justification once more for transfer of credit. During the various discussions on transfer of credit there has been perhaps too little concern for the fact that Ivy Tech has a substantially different mission than the four-year institutions, and as such defines the appropriate literacies for its students substantially differently as well.

Many of the continuers appeared to be very resourceful and committed to their education (Commission for Higher Education, Agenda 143). This fits the national profile of those students who become successful transfer students and those who do not (American Council on Education 30, 48).

The active continuers take more classes, earn more degrees, are more goal-oriented, and are more likely to be found at IU campuses, with IUPUI being the campus of first choice (Commission for Higher Education, Agenda 191). The University of Southern Indiana in 1985, became the first Indiana public institution to accept credit earned at Ivy Tech. USI accepted technical coursework (Commission for Higher Education, Agenda 155). The current thrust of the legislature and Ivy Tech seems to be focused on accepting general education coursework rather than technical coursework. It was even stated at the regional Board of Trustees meeting in February 1992 that there is no intention at this time to transfer technical courses. This approach to transfer of credit has always perplexed me, because it seems to me that what Ivy Tech is mostly known for is its ability to teach technical coursework. The transfer of technical coursework makes more sense to me than the transfer of general coursework, because one would expect that Ivy Tech's students would be more technically competent than anything else.

The argument against the transfer of technical courses is that those courses are considered by the various members of the Commission for Higher Education as too work specific. Even though, again, the students who have had successful credit transfer have more often transferred technical rather than general education courses (Commission for Higher Education, Agenda 159). Dr. Clyde Ingle, the Commissioner

of Higher Education, stated that articulation agreements "should maximize the number of IVTC technical courses that are eligible for transfer" (Commission for Higher Education, Agenda 206). The messages being conveyed at the state level then and the messages being conveyed at the regional level seem to be mixed. The focus of the discussion at this time remains, however, general education coursework.

The legislature determined that the results of the study were significant enough and the lack of action by the colleges and universities was nonexistent enough to force the passage of legislation, which was subsequently signed into law by Governor Bayh that would require up to 30 hours of credit (10 courses) that could be transferred between Indiana's post-secondary institutions. The recommended ten courses consist of the following:

American Government
American History
Biology I
Computer Literacy
English Composition I
English Composition II
Philosophy
Psychology I
Sociology I
Speech

Ivy Tech has become the focus of the transfer discussion, because transfer of credit will demand from Ivy Tech the greatest number of changes. Vincennes University, Indiana's other primarily two-year institution, transfers a much higher percentage of students, 27.4 percent, to public four-year institutions than Ivy Tech does. Ivy Tech,

however, by virtue of being a much larger institution, transfers a much higher total number of students--2,807 to Vincennes' 1,031 based on the CHE study (Commission for Higher Education, Agenda 171).

The CHE in its Indicators of Progress brochure, which outlines objectives for post-secondary education in Indiana, states in objective six, "By 2000, one percent of the annual credit hours generated by Indiana's four-year institutions should consist of credit transferred by Indiana's two year institutions" (10). One percent based on 1988-89 figures would constitute 41,000 credit hours. The benchmark for this goal is 16,000 credit hours of transfer credit by 1994-95 (10).

Another reason why transfer of credit may become an important issue for Indiana deals with indicator of progress number three, "Minority Participation." Nationwide, in 1988, approximately half (over one million) of all African-American, Hispanic, Asian-Americans, and Native Americans who were enrolled in higher education were enrolled in two-year colleges (American Council on Education 4). The CHE would like to see the minority population of Indiana's post-secondary institutions be reflective of the state's overall minority population. According to the 1980 census, 8.3 percent of Indiana's population between the ages of 18-44 was African-American. Post-secondary African-American enrollment was 6.1 percent. For post-secondary enrollments to reflect the state's population distribution, 8,000

additional African-American students will need to enroll in the state's post-secondary institutions. The deficit is especially pronounced in four-year programs (Commission for Higher Education, Indicators 6).

Two year colleges have traditionally enrolled more minority students than four-year colleges (Jones 4). Currently the minority population of Ivy Tech Region 02 is 8.4 percent while the minority population of IUSB is 5.2 percent (U.S. Department of Education, Office for Educational Research and Improvement, 1984). Race by itself does not seem to be a major factor in whether or not students transfer credit, but race combined with economic status is. Those students who are both minority and of low socioeconomic status are much less likely to enroll in college or to enroll in a four-year college (American Council on Education 28). Transfer from the national perspective is seen as "central to the realization of equal opportunity in education" (American Council on Education 1).

Based on the previously cited 1984 study conducted by the Department of Education, Ivy Tech, Region 02 was the only area post-secondary institution in which minority enrollments were reflective of the county's minority population. The Facts About Ivy Tech, Fall 1991 End of term Planning and Education report indicates that 75 percent of Indiana's minority population is African-American and 79 percent of Ivy Tech's minority population is African-American (Chart 3). The Hoosier African-Americans then seem

to be somewhat consistent with their national counterparts, a sizable number of whom begin their higher education careers in two-year colleges (Jones 4). It is impossible to ignore the transfer issue then in light of the CHE's goal to increase the baccalaureate completion rates of minority students (Commission for Higher Education, Indicators 9).

If Indiana is to increase the number of minorities who enroll in its post-secondary institutions, especially the four year ones, and to also increase the number of students who graduate from these institutions, transfer of credit is one way to achieve that goal. It is also impossible to ignore transfer of credit in considering Ivy Tech's definition of written literacy. Transfer of credit discussions have been the driving force behind the college's current re-thinking of the literacies that it demands of its students.

Student Success in Transfer Programs

The American Association of Community and Junior Colleges (AACJC) clearly states that for transfer students to be successful, it is imperative that both the two year and the four year institutions believe in the philosophy behind transfer of credit and collaborate with each other (95). A cooperative effort must be undertaken and faculty at the various institutions must trust each other for transfer to be a successful undertaking. This trust

currently seems to be nonexistent in Indiana. Dr. Richard Clokey from Indiana State University stated the concerns that the four year colleges have with the transfer of credit issue are "curriculum, quality of students, and competency of the faculty" (Commission for Higher Education, Agenda 207). All three of these issues are literacy issues. The implication is that first of all the curriculum being presented is not literate enough or not literate in the "right" way for students who take Ivy Tech courses to be able to succeed in university courses. The quality of the students as a concern certainly implies that the students themselves have also not achieved the needed literacies to be successful at the university. And faculty competency or the perceived lack of faculty competency by Dr. Clokey, screams loudly that the literacy that is being offered could not possibly be appropriate if the faculty themselves do not have the desired literacies.

Ivy Tech is addressing the curriculum issue by asking the four year colleges to send consultants to help them to develop guidelines and faculty credentials for those courses that are being considered for transfer. Many of the four-year institutions responded by supplying consultants to participate in the curriculum review process; others did not. The consultants for the composition courses represented Indiana State University and Indiana University, Bloomington. During the curriculum reform process, there were times in which Ivy Tech was asked to add content or

prerequisites to their courses that the four-year institutions currently do not require. For instance, the consultants on the speech committee found it necessary to require English 101, a composition course, as a prerequisite for speech. When asked if composition was a pre-requisite for speech at their own institutions the response was "no." This example illustrates some of the frustrations that Ivy Tech faculty feel as they are moving through this curriculum reform process.

Ivy Tech has decided, by a 12-1 vote of the regional academic officers to, as a part of this curriculum reform process, offer to its students a one-track system, that system being the transfer track. Many other two-year colleges throughout the country offer a two-track system, so that students can make the choice concerning whether they even want to transfer or not. Written literacy in a one-track system must somehow be the literacy of the academy. The accepted literacy is the critical literacy that is needed if a student expects to transfer credit and be a successful student at the four-year institution. A literacy that I am not convinced is included in Ivy Tech's expanded view. The view has expanded to include contributing to the system beyond the economics, but I do not see evidence that it has expanded to potentially changing the system.

The assumed poor quality of the Ivy Tech student is reflected in the attitude of many faculty at the four-year institutions. Nationally it has been shown that negative

attitudes toward the two-year institution often manifest themselves in negative attitudes toward transfer and continuing students who often "may be viewed as second-class citizens" (American Council on Education 41). Many of the faculty at the four-year institutions are resentful of the legislative mandate and seem to feel that they are going to be forced to deal with inferior students as a result of the mandate.

As an open door rather than a selective admissions college, Ivy Tech certainly does accept students that would not be accepted at other institutions. Ivy Tech though does offer ways for those students to achieve the literacy that they will need to be a success at the college. Even though the CHE study found that the lack of transfer of credit was a deterrent to many students who had considered pursuing more education, I do not think that huge numbers of Ivy Tech students would elect to transfer even with that option. Currently, it seems that only about 5 percent of Ivy Tech's former students are pursuing a baccalaureate degree. I doubt that masses of former Ivy Tech students are going to descend in hordes on the state's four-year institutions. Those who choose to go on will probably continue to be those individuals who probably could have succeeded if they would have started their post-secondary education at a four year institution, but for a variety of reasons chose not to. Even if Ivy Tech someday matches national transfer rates, only 23.6 percent, or approximately one in every five

students, would transfer (Jones 6). The students who transfer successfully are usually those who have been in two-year colleges that have acquainted them with the intensive reading and writing required at the four-year institution (American Council on Education 36). It will be up to the Ivy Tech faculty then to provide the potential transfer students with the literacy that they will need to be successful.

Non-traditional students often do not have any family tradition in higher education. They have not been encouraged to attend college, nor have they been told they are capable of college-level work (National Center for Academic Transfer, Vol. 2, 3-6). This means that they are frequently going to pursue a degree initially at a place where they will feel minimally threatened. That place is often a two-year open door institution such as Ivy Tech. Without a family background in higher education these students often do not understand what education programs are available, nor do they understand at the beginning of their educational careers what is involved in transferring credit. Indeed eight of the thirty-five Ivy Tech students who completed the CHE survey stated that they weren't looking at transfer initially because their goals were to get some training to upgrade on their jobs (Commission for Higher Education, Agenda 225). (The thirty-five question survey was distributed to 103 former students who had taken more than fourteen credit hours at both Ivy Tech and the

receiving institution. Thirty-five individuals responded to the survey.)

What these students found, however, at the completion of their program was that many employers do not look at a two-year degree seriously. "The Degree was looked at and passed over" (Commission for Higher Education, Agenda 235). A phenomenon that has been observed throughout the country. "Associate degrees are largely viewed as a consolation prize by a society that operates on traditional standards of academic excellence. The real prize is the bachelor's degree" (Rendon 4). As soon as students become familiar enough with the system to understand this inherent prejudice, they begin to become interested in a different credential, a different literacy certification. If, however, they have not been taking coursework on the transfer track, they must by necessity essentially start their education over. These then are not inferior students, but very dedicated ones.

". . . The competency of the faculty," or the perceived lack of competency is an issue of great concern to many of the individuals who teach at Ivy Tech. One thing that I think it is very important to emphasize is that there are many individuals at Ivy Tech who are not any happier about the prospect of transfer of credit than those faculty in the four-year institutions. Many of the people who teach at Ivy Tech have worked diligently over the years to keep up the various certifications required of them in their individual

fields, but are now finding that those certifications do not seem to matter to the college or the state. The credential that is being held up as "the" credential for faculty is the Master's degree. All faculty are being expected to obtain that degree or face the very real prospect of losing their positions. To people who are highly certified in their individual fields, and whose programs are currently not even under consideration for transfer this position seems very much like one with no regard for them or their expertise. The faculty resent the fact that they are being asked to have certain academic credentials to be able to keep jobs they feel, and rightly so in many cases, that they have done well for a number of years.

In addition, many of the faculty at Ivy Tech that I have spoken with believe in the prior mission of the college--to get individuals job ready. They feel that this new emphasis on general education coursework will lead to a de-emphasize on technical coursework and make it even more difficult for them to help students become job ready within the limits of a two-year degree. If Indiana is to achieve successful transfer of credit some day, the state must convince not only those who teach at the four-year institutions that transfer is an appropriate educational option, it must convince many of the faculty at Ivy Tech as well. Teachers at the two-year institution who do not trust the four-year institution may inadvertently influence students into thinking that transfer is not really such a

good idea afterall (American Council on Education 41). This stance could be potentially harmful to those students who wish to pursue additional education. Ivy Tech faculty distrusts the faculty at the four-year institutions then perhaps as much as they distrust Ivy Tech.

The major question here seems to be what are the literacy levels of the faculty and what credential is the most appropriate one? A question the faculty are answering differently than the state and the four year universities. Faculty want the credentials in their fields to be adequate, and the university wants the degree to be the minimum. Currently since the state is pushing for transfer, and ultimately it is up to a receiving institution whether or not it accepts credits for transfer, the four-year institutions are winning this credential battle. The resentment of Ivy Tech's faculty over losing the credential battle is multiplied by the fact that many of the faculty also think that the four-year institutions are so opposed to transfer of credit that as soon as all faculty are appropriately credentialed, there will be another road block. Thus, the universities will put transfer of credit on permanent hold.

The perceived incompetence of both faculty and students is emphasized once again if one reads the portion of the CHE survey in which the former Ivy Tech students were asked to relate what the four-year college they were now attending said to them about Ivy Tech. The students wrote on their

surveys,

"They put down Ivy Tech"

"Purdue-NC told me Ivy Tech is not a real college"

"Ivy Tech considered below standard,"

"IPFW laughed at me when I asked about transferring credit" (Commission for Higher Education, Agenda 237, 238). This attitude of superiority does not enhance the possibilities of effective collaboration.

How these various faculty members define written literacy then is another important piece of the overall definition. There are several faculty members at Ivy Tech in Region 02 who feel that drilling the students in grammar will better fit the goals of the class, which they see primarily as improving students' APS test scores. I interviewed several faculty members to attempt to determine what literacies they expect from students who enter their classes and also what literacies they expect the students to have after taking their courses. Many of these faculty state that they expect students to have a thorough understanding of grammar. There is a strong current of thought that a thorough understanding of grammar will equip the student to perform the tasks asked of them in the program classroom. After additional probing to attempt to understand what "tasks" the student would be expected to perform, I found that grammar drill probably would not have adequately equipped the students to meet the teacher's requirements.

One of the teachers in the office assistance program illustrated clearly by her comments how grammar has become synonymous with "cure-all" to many of these individuals for student writing woes. The instructor told me that her students needed more grammar. Upon further questioning, I discovered that what her students were having difficulty with was not grammar, but transcription. The students would have to listen to a dictation tape and convert that into a written document. Hence the "grammar" they were transposing should have been the grammar of the speaker. Other faculty members would also give answers that suggested that grammar drill was not going to solve the problems that they saw with their students' written literacy.

The faculty at Ivy Tech are generally concerned with the student's ability or inability to apply what they are learning in the classroom. Most of the teachers that I spoke with for this paper would support Knoblauch's definition of functional literacy for their students. One of the teachers on campus who thinks the use of portfolios to teach the students is a good idea, is supportive of the idea because she perceives it as application learning, which in essence it is. However, the application that I want the students to become comfortable with reaches beyond the functional aspects as defined by Knoblauch into the expressivist and critical realms.

Transfer of Credit in Indiana--The Concerns

There are several issues of concern with the data that was generated by the Commission for Higher Education's transfer study. One major problem was that it is nearly impossible to attain any reliable data concerning the number of transfer students from Ivy Tech attending either out-of-state or private institutions. In fact, locally it is obvious that more students do seem to transfer to private institutions, specifically Bethel or Tri-State, because these two institutions welcome them. Over the course of the last few years, Bethel has even begun to actively recruit students at the Ivy Tech campus.

Another major concern that I have is not with the study itself as much as it is with the state's approach to transfer of credit. If the state would like to have a community college system, something I would certainly support as an educator, I think there needs to be clear effective leadership that first of all admits that a community college is the goal and secondly takes steps to support that effort. By trying to re-mold Ivy Tech and at the same time to say that Ivy Tech will continue to do every thing it has in the past, the state is truly putting a tremendous burden on the institution itself. Effective transfer does not happen at the legislative level. Effective transfer happens at the faculty level.

Effective transfer is born out of collaboration and

trust between faculty at two-year and four-year colleges (American Council on Education 39), something that I illustrated earlier I do not believe currently exists. Legislated trust is analogous to an arranged marriage. The General Assembly may succeed in getting the two parties in bed together, but they are not going to be able to make either one of them like each other. Primarily, I think it is important to note that most of the faculty at Ivy Tech see the institution as a teaching institution with the students' best interests as their essential concern. At the same time these Ivy Tech teachers tend to see four-year institutions as unfeeling and uncaring toward the students. They look at the ivory towers of academia as research institutions which are much more concerned with ideas than they are with the well-being of students who live in the "real world" (as opposed to the unreal world of the university). They also see the four-year institutions as treating the two-year institutions as not only different, but inferior. The attitudinal changes that must take place for successful credit transfer in Indiana cannot be legislated.

For transfer of credit to work faculty at both kinds of institutions must learn to think inter-institutionally rather than institutionally (American Council on Education 39). Faculty collaboration then begins with discussion--What does your syllabus look like? How do you place people in your classes? (American Council on Education 39).

Faculty collaboration should progress to the point where the two groups are outlining common academic expectations (American Council on Education 5). Successful transfer of credit begins then with these collaborations, and virtually all successful transfer projects feature ongoing faculty meetings involving the faculty from both the two-year and the four-year institutions (National Center for Academic Achievement and Transfer, Vol. 3, 3).

Another concern that I have is that basically there is no data to base successful transfer on because there has not been successful transfer between Ivy Tech and the four-year institutions. Because of the conflicting educational missions, it is not surprising that of the continuers studied in 1989, none of them transferred any Ivy Tech credit to a public four-year institution. Only seven of the continuers received some credit by examination. Six of those seven received credit in areas in which they had completed Ivy Tech coursework (Commission for Higher Education, Agenda 191). Maybe just as importantly, the report indicates that most of the students did not elect to attempt to receive "credit by examination" (Commission for Higher Education, Agenda 143), and those few who did tended to fall into the "traditional student" category (Commission for Higher Education, Agenda 157).

Much of the research indicates that non-traditional students are typically not strong advocates for themselves. As a general statement I would agree with that assertion,

but I have difficulty applying that statement to individuals who have attended one institution and have advocated for themselves to a degree to decide to pursue additional education at another institution. I question perhaps if the students themselves might have realized that what they received from one institution was considerably different from what they wanted to receive from the other. In other words, the expected literacies that I keep returning to are different at Ivy Tech as it now exists and at the state's four-year institutions as they now exist. Even outside the realm of value judgments that one kind of education is somehow inherently better than another, the argument has to be accepted that an academic education is dramatically different from a technical one.

Another concern that I have is with the incredibly mixed messages that are currently being sent to students and were also sent to the students who participated in the CHE's survey. Of the thirty-five continuers who responded to the survey, ten students assumed their credits would transfer, eleven assumed they would not, and fourteen did not know or did not ask (Commission for Higher Education, Agenda 225). All of this discussion of transfer of credit is making the post-secondary landscape in Indiana even more confusing for the students and especially those who are the "poorer consumers of education." Many students assume the classes they are taking now will transfer, because transfer is being discussed. Some Ivy Tech graduates seem to assume that

courses they took previously will be transferred, when in fact, once any agreements are reached, it is my assumption that only those students who have taken those classes after the agreements have been reached will be able to transfer credit.

Ivy Tech has to do a much better job of clearly informing its students in regards to transfer issues. The college in the past has been very closed-mouthed and evasive when asked about transfer. One former student when responding to the CHE survey said, ". . . I was under the impression they [credits] could be transferred. . . This was not explained to me in detail. . .They did not lie--they just did not explain" (Commission for Higher Education, Agenda 231). Another former student was more harsh, "If anything they were very misleading and/or dishonest" (Commission for Higher Education, Agenda 234). Ivy Tech is falling into the trap of a college that does not provide enough information to its students. Colleges that do not provide adequate information to their students set themselves up for misunderstandings, misinformation, and very unhappy students (Jones viii).

Finally, perhaps my major concern with transfer of credit as it is now being addressed and because it is now being addressed, is that transfer is more a monetary issue to the state than it is an educational issue. While I am a taxpayer as well, and as such I would not want to ignore any institution or program that was potentially costing millions

of dollars a year in duplicated effort, transfer of credit reflects a fundamental shift in the philosophy of Ivy Tech. Transfer of credit may eventually save the people of Indiana millions of dollars a year, but if the students at Ivy Tech are going to be taking courses that are transfer level, the state has to realize that it has only just begun to spend money to allow faculty and the institution to make the necessary changes that this dramatic shift in focus is causing. Transfer of credit may someday be a workable reality in Indiana, but it will be a very long time before it will be a reality that many post-secondary educators are comfortable with. Transfer of credit means a different literacy for the students who are attending Ivy Tech.

The institution's definition of written literacy in light of both its past and its future then appears to be primarily functional, with a movement to also include cultural perspectives.

## PERSONAL PERSPECTIVES

### My Experiences as a Writer and a Teacher

My own experiences that have led me to this classroom are important because not only have they shaped my own experiences as a writer, they have certainly shaped my experiences as a teacher as well. Indeed, I know they have shaped my willingness to look at my composition classroom from the standpoint of classroom research. "'Those who know, teach. Those who don't learn' In practice the line between the teacher and the learner will repeatedly be obscured" (Kozol 118). The essential idea behind this quotation, that the teacher is one who brings certain knowledge to the classroom and so are the students, is an idea that I felt I had to become comfortable with very early in my teaching career at Ivy Tech. It was difficult for me when I walked into my first Ivy Tech classroom in my mid-twenties and found that I was probably the youngest person in that room. I often times questioned what I really knew and could bring to a class. That question was my guiding theme my first few terms at Ivy Tech, and has since become a part of every class I teach.

Freire follows this same theme when he writes, "Education must begin with the solution of the teacher-student contradiction, so that both are simultaneously teachers and students" (2). To me teaching and learning are entwined. To be an effective learner or an effective

teacher involves observing, analyzing, posing questions, and developing solutions. The purpose of my classroom research then is not necessarily to know, "but to know better" (Knoblauch "Knowing" 26). If I can better know those individuals that I am encountering in my classroom, and perhaps more importantly, if I can allow myself to learn from them, then perhaps I can help to create an environment in which they will also allow themselves to learn from me. Each student enters the classroom with an agenda. Some how a recognition of my own agenda and the individual student's must come into some kind of cooperative format for the classroom to be a successful learning/teaching venture for all of us.

What I am trying to establish is a classroom in which the student does not see me, as the teacher, as the only one with the "Truth," but that the truth is something we will discover together. I am learning how to become a "connected teacher." One who does not carry power over the students, but instead carries an authority which is based on cooperation (Blenky et al. 227). From the vantage point of a student, I have had very few connected teachers. I met my first ones during my junior and senior years in college. They conducted classes in which my sense of being a reader or writer was enhanced because I had to learn how to rely on my own judgments. This is a classroom in which the teacher acknowledges that the students have a great deal to offer not only to each other, but also to the teacher.

In February of 1984, I began teaching a course called Communications 8110 at Ivy Tech. The course, at that time, was primarily a business writing course with an emphasis on memo and letter writing. My previous teaching experiences had been limited to the public school system in the town of Froid, Montana. I spent three years in Froid from 1980-1983. My first year there I substituted for any ill or vacationing teacher. Most school systems do not count substitute teaching as "real" teaching and even though what I did frequently probably did fall outside the realm of teaching, my year of subbing taught me a great deal about being as well-prepared as one can be and to learn how to roll with whatever punches were thrown (once even literally). It certainly seemed "real" enough to me, so I count that as my first year of teaching experience.

The next two years I taught high school English which consisted primarily of literature, some composition, and a nine-week unit in traditional formal grammar. My only actual instruction in formal grammar as a student was a twelve week survey course I took as an undergraduate in which I learned for the first time how to diagram sentences. During my high school English career, as a student, the courses were designed with a phase elective format. Every nine weeks the students chose a new English course to take. Some of the offerings were Sports Reading, Reading for Fun, Writing a Term Paper, and Mythology. My interests at that time were speech and drama, so my high school English

transcript lists several speech and acting classes.

The survey of English grammars course I enrolled in as a college junior had been designed for those people who were planning to teach English. The four weeks spent on traditional grammar in that course was the extent of my background in formal grammar. Because of my own limited training in formal grammar, I initially found it very difficult to teach the grammar units to my high school classes. In addition to my difficulties because I was not quite sure that I understood formal grammar myself, was the beginning of my philosophical dilemma of how to best teach writing. An issue, by the way, that I think and hope will always be a part of my teaching career as I continue to observe and re-think what I am doing in the classroom and what I am trying to accomplish. I have reached certain decisions about my teaching. I know, for example, that teaching formal grammar does not work in the classes I teach, but I am constantly finding new things that do.

The argument over whether or not formal grammar instruction improves the performance of writers is certainly not new, nor was it new in the 1970s when I was studying for my undergraduate degree, but the publication of books like Shaugnessy's Errors and Expectations in 1977 gave a new perspective to the argument and greatly influenced the kinds of teaching methods that were promoted as effective to those of us who were studying to be English teachers at that time. Since in my own experiences as a writer and a learner I was

a strong advocate of learning by doing, the philosophy of having students write to learn to write was one that I was immediately comfortable with.

I still clearly remember my own frustrations as a freshman composition student at Ball State University when my writing was evaluated on Ball State's eight standards--four of which were formal grammar mandates, that I did not understand. I had two major problems in freshman composition. The first one was that I wrote lots of run-on sentences; the second one was that I had no earthly idea what a run-on sentence was or how I was supposed to fix it for the next draft. I shared the opinion of many of the students who are currently enrolled in the writing classes I teach at Ivy Tech. It was not that I could not write, it was just that I did not understand grammar and as soon as I could get the grammar down I would be able to be a successful writer. My continued insistence on writing run-on sentences gained me substantial re-writing opportunities, which truly did not amount to much more than trying to figure out how to correct all of my run-on sentences. If someone would just explain all this grammar stuff to me, and specifically the run-on sentences, of course, I would become a writer. Eventually through a process of trial and error and the multitude of papers I had to write for various literature classes, my confidence in my writing began to improve.

My own writing as a student then influenced how I

approached the teaching of high school English and later communications and writing courses at Ivy Tech. As a student, particularly a college student, I initially felt that my writing was somewhat inferior. The first few years in college I think that the grades that I received in my writing courses bore out that assumption. The lowest grades on my college transcript are the grades I received in writing courses. My experiences with run-on sentences just reinforced my belief, that grammar, and everything implied by it, was something I was supposed to have learned before I decided to attend Ball State. Even as my confidence as a writer improved there was often still the nagging doubt that what I wrote was somehow still not good enough.

As a first year teacher though I had a major dilemma to confront. There was a part of me that knew that I could learn by doing and even maybe enjoy the learning how to write process, but there was another part of me that thought if I taught my high school students all that grammar, that I was supposed to be teaching them anyway, perhaps they would not have the same difficulties early in their college careers that I faced. Did I teach something that I still did not understand, so obviously it had never really helped me, or did I go with what my professors had said and opt not to teach formal grammar?

The dilemma, this time, was resolved for me because through the process of my questioning the benefits of teaching grammar, I discovered that the grammar unit was a

school board mandate, and if I wanted the job, I would be teaching units in grammar. My experiences teaching grammar made me very much the epitome of the person who never really learns something until she is responsible for teaching it to someone else (Caywood 68). I had to learn grammar, and really learn it for the first time. I was teaching seniors who had already completed three years of grammar instruction from a teacher who did believe in its benefits, and I am quite sure was not trying to learn it as she went. I was constantly challenged to be able to accurately answer their questions.

In May 1983, I left high school teaching. The next stop on my teaching travels was Ivy Tech. I taught for Ivy Tech on a part-time basis for two years. The Carl Perkins legislation not only gave Ivy Tech a chance to expand its basic skills program, it also gave me an opportunity to move from part-time to full-time status. When I first began working for the basic skills program, there was no writing course offered at the pre-technical level. The program offered courses in arithmetic, algebra, and reading. There was also a course offered to improve student writing, but it was a grammar course rather than a writing course. The grammar course used a traditional workbook approach. Students were asked to go through various exercises identifying parts of speech, making corrections, and so on.

I ran the first BSA writing course in the spring of 1986 with six students. The original course has since grown

to two courses, and Region 02's enrollment in those two courses now averages more than 100 students a semester. The course, according to the state guidelines, originally was to focus on sentence and paragraph structures--run-on sentences were still haunting me. I finally decided during the first few terms that teaching grammar did not work in the courses that I was teaching. I was constantly frustrated when I was teaching grammar by the students seeming ability to understand and apply a concept to a drill sheet, just to have those same students write a paragraph or essay in which they repeatedly made the same mistake that they had just demonstrated that they understood by scoring 100 percent on a worksheet. I quickly decided that I did not like focusing on writing paragraphs either because students would tell me, "I had a lot more to say, but you said you just wanted a paragraph."

BSA 024 as I now teach it is a portfolio writing course. Students are asked to write for each class. These daily writings are usually based on a reading that I have given to them, and are usually a page to two pages in length. The writings are multi-paragraph writings, but the word essay is usually not uttered in the classroom. Students always have the option of writing on a topic of their choice. The key is though that they do write for every class session. Classroom time is spent sharing student and teacher writings, discussing the readings and the students' responses and reactions to them, re-writing

and revising. Students are responsible for choosing which of their works they wish to revise into "finished" pieces which will be placed into their final portfolios. They then choose two of these finished pieces to be evaluated by an outside committee of English faculty. The review committee determines if the students are ready to move on to the next level writing course.

Along with analyzing how my previous experiences impact what happens in the writing classroom, it is also important for me to note what pre-conceived notions of the students I enter the classroom with. I have been teaching basic writing since 1986 and even though I have never made a conscious effort to observe my students before, I have accumulated many casual observations that had led me to develop my own expectations. First, I expect from these students both resistance and acceptance. Past students have tended to be resistant to a basic writing class, because many of them see it as a barrier to their goals. Students frequently come to Ivy Tech to gain quick training or a degree and to use the college as a stepping stone into a better-paying job or career. They come to Ivy Tech to get in and then back out as quickly as possible. At the same time though, I have experienced relative acceptance of the writing course. Students seem to think that it is somewhat acceptable to be told they have writing deficiencies. Students in the writing classroom will often admit--"I don't write well," which they will often follow by "I just can't

spell" or "I just don't remember the parts of speech." I feel my first challenge in any writing class is to convince the students that they are capable of writing and that good writing does include much more than good spelling and knowing the parts of speech.

I often feel torn in the classroom between wanting to just help the students to reach their own literacy goals and wanting to impose my own goals on top of theirs. Knoblauch offers four different definitions of written literacy--functional, cultural, expressivist, and critical. To some degree, I think all four kinds are valid and important, although I would probably say that my own experiences as a writer make expressivist, a way to get in touch with and explore the self, and critical, literacy as a way to assess one's own society and to perhaps try to make changes in that society as the two definitions which are the most important ones to me. If I am going through any kind of difficult personal situation, my way of dealing with the dilemma has always been to write about it. I have used old journals as a way to compare where I was then to where I am now. The ability to express myself personally and to use writing to see how I have grown and changed personally, is an essential part of being literate to me.

I also think that critical literacy is an essential part of my own definition. I think it is important to not just accept the "systems," but to also question them and to work to change them when they need it. My own definition of

written literacy also includes the ability to control the language. Ideas that are refined and developed as they are put on paper. In other words, I see writing as a crucial part of the process of exploring what an idea means. Audience is also very important to my concept of written literacy. Writing is something that will some day be consumed by an audience, whether that audience is me or someone else.

## STUDENT PERSPECTIVES

It is January 1992, and I am getting ready to teach a new group of students. There are 32 names on the class roster the first week. While I advocate for smaller classes, the reality seems to be that students cannot always take the class at other times and the 11:00 time slot seems to be a popular one. Four of the names on the class list I will never be able to put a face on--they never show up. One student shows up for the first class but never returns. Throughout the course of the semester, seven of the students will quit attending class at various points in time. None of these individuals completes the paperwork to officially withdraw from the course. Some of them contact me at various points in time and want to try to catch up. I diligently put together the needed work. Some of them return for one or two class sessions--most don't.

Their reasons for dropping out of the class give an accurate overview of the kinds of concerns that Ivy Tech students constantly face. One woman has five children and finds trying to keep up with them and four classes too overwhelming. Two gentlemen have family problems, which drives one of them into psychotic episodes; the other decides to try again summer semester. One student's mother has a stroke, and he must leave South Bend to care for her. The others just quit attending with no explanation and phone calls lead to disconnected numbers or "he's not here" but

"he" also never returns my calls. One of the students was encouraged to withdraw because he was having so much difficulty completing the assigned writings. This particular young man was an ideal candidate for referral to an outside agency, and he is currently enrolled in Adult Basic Education classes through the South Bend Community Schools. As of mid-term, there are twenty-three students attending the course, three of them are attending sporadically, and the rest I would classify as regular attenders. At semester's end, I will be asked to give grades to twenty-eight of the original thirty-two.

"Standardized literacy tests are tests of Standard English, and Standard English is held to be the benchmark of opportunity" (Stuckey 119). The majority of the students enrolled in BSA 024, Introduction to English I, spring semester through their responses and actions have certainly indicated that they share this point of view. Upon entering the class, they seem to see written literacy as a ticket to success, primarily in the form of a job or a better job, one that will comfortably allow them to support their families and themselves. They are advocating the same functionalist viewpoint at this point as the institution is. For many students though, their perceptions of literacy will undergo some changes throughout the course of the term. They will all hang on to the idea though that improving their ability to write is something that will help them to be more successful in the world of work. Many of these individuals

are also parents and state that they see enhanced literacy skills as a way to improve their children's chances of a better life as well. Others saw instead, as many past students have that the writing class was not a way to enhance their own opportunities. They instead saw it as a barrier. One student in particular who was applying to the automotive program expressed his resentment at having to take the course: "I basically came here to study automotive. I didn't come here to study English."

I choose to explore these students definitions of written literacy by specifically asking them at the beginning, at mid-term, and again at the end of the semester what they expected from the class and how they felt about the written word. A great deal of the information about students' perceptions of literacy then I have garnered from direct questioning of the students. However, since this course was taught using portfolios, there was an emphasis on writing and revising that many of the students had not previously experienced in the classroom. I was able then to observe how the students responded to a variety of classroom activities and use those observations, along with the students actual statements, to draw some conclusions about the students' perceptions of written literacy.

Regionally, (South Bend, Elkhart, Warsaw) the Ivy Tech Basic Skills Advancement Program serves between 900 and 1000 unduplicated students each semester. The semester just prior to Spring 1992, the program served 947 students. Of

those 947, 712 students were served at the South Bend campus. Of those 712 students, 529 or 74 percent were Caucasian, and 150 or 21 percent were African-American. The remaining 5 percent of the students were Native American, Hispanic or Asian American. Of the regular attenders in BSA 024, 54 percent are Caucasian and 46 percent are African-American. Of the 712 total 443 or 62 percent are female and 269 or 38 percent are male. The BSA 024 class is 58 percent female and 42 percent male. The BSA program served students between the ages of 17 and 73. The students in BSA 024 range in age from 21 to 49. This class reflects a slightly different profile from the total Basic Skills Advancement population (BSA End of Semester Report, Fall 1991 and student registration forms).

As with any class, the demographics are only a small part of the picture and cannot adequately describe the complexities of this group of people who have been randomly thrown together. Many educational studies indicate that for a certain kind of student, usually non-traditional and one who did not take high school very seriously, that a two-year open-door institution is this kind of individual's last chance for a post-secondary education. These students certainly qualify as a group of non-traditional students. There are only four men in the class who fit the criteria of a traditional student. These young men are twenty or twenty-one years old and have never been married and do not have any children. Of these four one is deaf and another

has been, according to his writing, mentally abused.

The remainder of the students are either older, or married, or divorced, or parents, or all of the above. The majority of these students have come to this class after being out of high school for an average of five to ten years. Most of them have held poor-paying jobs in the service sector: McDonald's and housekeeping jobs in local hotels are the most commonly mentioned previous or current employment. Many of them also fit the profile of someone who has not had great school success previously. A few have GED's rather than diplomas and one attended Whitney Young Alternative School. Some of the students have also come to Ivy Tech because of various injuries that no longer allow them to keep their previous jobs.

Jonathan Kozol states that 60 million, over one third of all adult Americans possess "functional" or "marginal" literacy skills (10). A recent promotional video for the North Carolina tech prep program estimates that the middle 50 percent of recent high school graduates are leaving high school at least two grade levels behind where they should be to be considered high school graduates (North Carolina Tech Prep Leadership Development Center). Over 70 percent of all incoming students to Ivy Tech in this region are recommended to take some courses in the BSA program. Should these students then who are recommended to enroll in BSA coursework be counted among Kozol's 60 million? The word functional is the key word. Most of the individuals who

walk into Ivy Tech I think Kozol would consider to be functionally literate. They can read and write. They cannot, however, always read and write at the levels and in the ways demanded of someone in a college environment, whether it is a technical college or an academic one. They often want to increase their levels of functioning. They aspire to be functional in the definition of Knoblauch--functional to the degree that they will be able to increase their earning power.

These students have been doing the kinds of functional writing that Kozol often refers to--the kinds of writing needed to survive daily life. The kinds of writing that these students say they do as a part of their daily lives, frequently consists of "chore" notes to their children (e.g. take out the garbage), grocery lists, and filling out forms. Many Ivy Tech students are coming to school on financial aid. Many of them are also receiving other kinds of aid as well. Aid to Families with Dependent Children, Vocational Rehabilitation, Veteran's Benefits, IMPACT, Workforce Development Services, and others are all making it possible for these individuals to attend Ivy Tech. To maintain these various kinds of aid, the student is responsible for maintaining an avalanche of paperwork--a kind of writing certainly, but again not the kind of writing that is typically valued in the classroom.

The students who are placed in BSA 024, Introduction to English I, the lowest level English course taught at Ivy

Tech have scored below the 25 percentile on the APS test. These students come to Ivy Tech with very specific educational goals. Of the 20 students who were present for an in-class writing that asked them to explore their educational goals, three specifically mentioned a desire to some day attend Indiana University South Bend. Two others indicated by their choice of program (Associate's Degree Nursing leading to an R.N.) that they would be attending classes at IUSB. (Students enrolled in the ADN program take all their general education courses at IUSB so as to not have transfer of credit problems with general education credits if they decide to pursue the BSN). Two other students specifically mentioned Ivy Tech's cost as an incentive. One student mentioned Southwestern Michigan as a school which he had previously attended. One of the ADN students also mentioned that she had looked into the nursing program at Bethel, as well as IUSB, but found the cost prohibitive.

The remaining students also cited a desire for more education, most of them "to make more money." In fact eleven of the remaining twelve students specifically mentioned jobs or careers as their reason for attending the college. One other student implied the job market was a major consideration of hers in returning to college, when she wrote her goal was "to learn different technologies that will help me in the future." Since I am going to try to understand the English classroom and written literacy

through the various definitions offered by these students, I need to acknowledge that the majority of these students have tied their educational objectives directly to economic objectives and they are certainly expressing Knoblauch's functional view of written literacy.

The majority of these students are pursuing certificates or degrees in the Business Division either administrative office technology (four students), accounting (one student), small business administration (four students), or computer information systems (six students). Five other students are pursuing certificates or degrees through the health division--two students are pursuing Associate's degrees in nursing (leading to the RN), one an Associate's degree in medical assisting and two are pursuing technical certificates (one year program) in licensed practical nursing. Only three students are pursuing degrees in the fields that most people associate with Ivy Tech. One student is working toward a degree in automotive services, and two others are working toward degrees in industrial drafting.

At the beginning of the course, I asked the students to write down what they expected to gain from the class. Only two students mentioned that one of their expectations was to gain fluency in writing. A goal that as the teacher of the course is extremely important to me. It became evident to me as I read the students' course expectations that they perceived the written word as a very powerful entity. It

was obvious that many of them were aware that in the past colleges "have used linguistic conventions as hurdles to weed out those who are not 'college material'" (Russell 63). The idea of college is extremely intimidating, and one of the most intimidating aspects seems to be an ability to learn the language. "I have always wanted to go to college but, was always afraid of failure back years ago."

The power of not just the written word, but written conventions as perceived by these students, was reinforced once again when several students tied their course expectations to their morals and their self-esteem. One student wrote, "Moralistically speaking, in this day and time, the future of my children depends on what they know. There[1] world would literally, be open, if they push themselves to learn more by reading." The indication that I got from this student and others was that they knew by expanding their own literacy they not only had a possibility of improving their children's lifestyles with what they could provide for them, but that they also felt that they would be better parents overall by expanding their own literacies.

Although several of the men in the class were parents, it was the women who most frequently tied additional education to parenting. Tammy, a twenty-one year old single mother with one daughter, wrote, ". . . I could get an education so that I can become a better mother. . . . me having an education will not guarantee that I will be a

better mother. . . [but] if I did not have an education I probably would not be able to teach [my daughter] how to read, write, count, and say her ABC's." Marta, another single mother and recent high school graduate, wrote, "I needed more education to give my daughter a roof over her head and love and support for her. . ." This citation of their children being the motivating force for additional parental education at a variety of levels is mentioned by several researchers including Kozol (104) and Taylor/Dorsey-Gaines (12). The various researchers emphasize that despite reports that those from certain socio-economic and ethnic groups do not place a high value on their children's education, children are usually the primary driving force for parental education because the parent believes that by improving her education, she enhances the chances of her child doing well in school now and perhaps pursuing additional education for herself later.

Five students wrote that they felt they should feel better about themselves at the conclusion of the course. "I like to accomplish in English how to write a letter with out any errors. I know I can do it with all my effort and determination. Also, I will feel better about myself using all the right grammar and knowing how to use the right punctuation." Another student, Darlene, the mother of five who dropped the course with only a few weeks left, wrote, "I have trouble putting my thoughts down on paper because, when I write what I'am thinking down it comes out different on

paper then in my head. It could be possible that I'am 'freezing up.' But not because I see a blank page, but because I'm unsure of myself. I guess deep down inside I don't feel confident with myself, so when I write and I know someone is going to be reading it, and it makes me nervous and I freeze up." Marsha, a recently divorced mother of three in her mid-forties, who seemed to have a more expressivist view of literacy both at the beginning and the end of class than the other students wrote, "Now as I start over, it seems to me that attending Ivy Tech and attending this class is the first steps into going back & finding the person who could sit down and pick up a book and read it without feeling that she was taking time from someone else." One other student wrote, ". . . I hope to better my self as a person and a student."

The tie between a student's self-esteem and writing abilities were very clearly expressed by these students. These students have accepted the idea put forth by Knoblauch and others that to be literate in the modern world implies a more developed mode of existence ("Literacy" 75). The idea that somehow those people and cultures that are literate are inherently superior to those people and societies that are not literate is certainly felt by these individuals. Literacy gives one an essential claim to authority in our society, and it is a claim that these students are trying to stake.

Other students expressed concerns with the quality of

their writing itself as the main focus of what they hoped to change in the course. Emma, a woman in her late thirties, who was one of only five students in the course to say from the beginning that she enjoyed the freedom of writing, wrote, "My grammar is very bad, and I would like to know how I can use it better when writing. I love to write, but I don't know how to write that good . . . I can't put my through [thoughts] on paper well plus I'm a bad speller. I forget how to spell words." Eight students said they thought the primary key to better writing was a better vocabulary. "I want to broaden my vocabulary. I would like to talk in complete sentences and be sure of myself when I do talk or write a letter." This particular student expectation has many layers in my mind. Vocabulary is the first thing the student mentions, perhaps the first thing that she thought of. Then, however, the student goes on to mention complete sentences--one of those formal writing conventions, but then she also mentions the issue of a comfort level for writing that she hopes her improved vocabulary and complete sentences will provide for her.

Six other students mentioned grammar and four punctuation as the keys to good writing. "My expectations to get out of this class is to learn the proper English grammar and to be a better writer." Brenda, one of the two Associate's degree nursing students in the class wrote, "I want to understand a sentence. Why do you need a verb and a noun with every sentence? I want to be able to dissect a

sentence." Another student said he expected to learn how to write with no errors. "I would also like to be able to write a productive paper that makes sense, and has the correct usage of grammar and punctuation. I hope this course will help me achieve that goal to become a better writer." Marie, a single woman in her mid-twenties who was attending Ivy Tech to receive training after a back injury left her unable to perform her previous job and who wrote the previous passage was one of the few students who mentioned the sense of her idea, and learning how to refine that sense as an important goal for her to work toward in the course.

I find the emphasis that these students place on the written conventions of the language and the almost total lack of words dedicated to the ideas that they might want to express in their writing as part of a very important commentary on these students' perceptions of written literacy. Some of the research that has been conducted on basic writers indicates that basic writers do not have an adequate awareness of audience and that lack of audience awareness leads to their halting composing styles and their often incomprehensible writings (Pianko 15). I maintain after observing these students and reading their papers that assertion is inaccurate. I think these students know exactly who their audience is--it is a teacher. They also know exactly what these audience members will be looking for when they grade their papers--correct word usage,

punctuation errors, run-on sentences and fragments, and a variety of other grammar and punctuation errors that they do not understand and do not have any idea of how to correct.

Many of the frustrations these students have experienced with other English classes reinforced this contention in my mind. Many of the students included in their initial course expectations what they had studied in previous English courses. High school English, most of these students only other "writing" course, appears to have been a hodgepodge of literature, grammar, and speech for most of these students. Few of them share very fond memories of their high school English courses or teachers.

> English, at times, was not my favorite class, but the deciding factor as to [whether] I like the English coarse depended on if I like the teacher.
>
> My english classes were like kinda boring but sometimes ok I usually get half way decent grades in English as long as we ain't diagraming sentences. I studied Literature, grammar, punctuation of course, no English teacher lets you get away with no punctuation.
>
> I expect to re-learn every thing I didn't understand in high school, get a better understanding in everything I do. . . .

The course they are now taking is also currently called English although it is primarily a writing course. The structure of this course and the material "covered" is substantially different from any other English courses that most of these individuals have taken. (As a result of the curriculum reform that the college is currently undergoing, the subcommittee responsible for rewriting the description

and objectives for this course has suggested that the name of the course be changed to writing to more accurately reflect what the course emphasizes. The recommendation is likely to be implemented.)

In most of the English courses these students have been enrolled in previously, it appears they wrote very little. If they were asked to write as a part of their courses, the writing was done with very little instructor feedback during the writing process. Most of feedback the students received was given to them after their papers were handed in to their teachers. Often this "feedback" consisted of red marks that designated only errors. This kind of feedback has reinforced in these students' minds, that first of all there is a right way and a wrong way to write--and the teacher knew what that right way was. The perception of written literacy, at least initially that these students bring to the classroom, is one in which literacy can be measured in some kind of quantifiable way. If one can master the components of written literacy, one can gain entrance to the world it promises. These students have received feedback on the grammar, mechanics, and conventions of writing--they know these things are expected of them if they are going to be successful. They are very aware of the only audiences they have ever had that they seem to think matter. The idea that correctness is the ultimate goal of the student writer is summarized by the following student statement: "I can write. . . knowing what your mind says. But it always

comes out different for me, so please if I can correct (emphasis mine) this problem tell me so I can, I love to right papers."

One student, Tammy, stated that she wanted to learn how to write a term paper. She was also enrolled in a college study skills class that teaches students how to write a term paper by breaking it down into several individual units. When that class began the "How to Write a Paper" unit, she dropped the course. She stayed, however, in the basic writing course which did not help her to meet her stated objective. I do not know if she wrote that expectation because she thought it was one that should be included in a college writing class or not. She did not, however, reach that goal although the opportunity to do so was present.

What are my interpretations of the information that these students have given me? I think that generally the students see writing as a very fragmented activity. The only clue to a desire to put these various components of writing together into some kind of cohesive whole were general statements such as "I want to be able to write better." "I hope to learn how to write better and neater." "I want to learn how to write in an approbrate [appropriate] way. I want to make some kind of sence when I write." If they can learn the rules--the grammar, punctuation, vocabulary--they will have the tools (a very technical concept) to write well and subsequently accomplish their other goals. This is a point of view that as I mentioned

previously, that I also held for a long time. Many of the students seem to view written words as entities that have kept them from achieving their goals. Linguistic conventions are perceived as the barriers that Russell mentions (63).

Many of the students in this class and in all the classes that I have ever taught at Ivy Tech also chose the college as the institution where they wanted to pursue post-secondary education because they saw the college as a place where they could pursue post-secondary education and at the same time avoid some of the English and writing courses that are associated with a more traditional post-secondary education. Many of the students who came to the college for training rather than an education expressed the fact that they feel somewhat betrayed by the legislature's push of the college into the transfer of credit realm. One student said to me, "If I wanted to do this kind of writing, I would have gone to Southwestern." These students are for the most part expressing functional literacy goals--goals that Ivy Tech proudly promoted until just a few years ago. Today, however, as mentioned previously, Ivy Tech is adding a different literacy goal.

At the onset of the course five of the students said they like to write. Students mentioned the freedom that writing gives them as the primary reason for enjoying it. These assertions of finding pleasure in writing somewhat surprised me, because many of the student discussions from

previous classes indicated that the majority of the students are disappointed and upset when they find that they will be expected to take this writing class and others. The placement test and its recommendations have added at least two semesters to these students' education at Ivy Tech, as all students recommended for this course are also automatically recommended for Basic Writing II.

Emma was one of the students who said she enjoyed writing. She writes, after telling me that she has bad grammar and spelling and that she cannot put her thoughts on paper, "I don't write much but when I do write I love the feeling it give me, I feel free to want to write anything." Maggie seems to be confused about how she feels about the written word as evidenced when she writes in the same paragraph, "ideas are hard to express on paper . . .but [they are] easier to write." She follows this by saying that she likes to write because it gives her time to think about what she wants to say, but she also says she finds writing difficult, because she cannot ever find the right words to express "exactly" what she is trying to express. The confusion that she is expressing is evidenced many times throughout the semester.

These apparently conflicting ideas expressed by those who say that they "like to write" intrigue me. As a writing teacher, I often say I want the students to enjoy writing. I want them to enjoy the process, to appreciate it and to use writing as a method of exploring. It sounds to me like

Emma at least is already enjoying the writing that she does. Other students, as the semester progresses, say they want to write something for their children--family stories or an actual children's book--and Michael even tells me that he would like to try to write a novel someday. The problem seems to be that what these students write and what happens in a classroom do not seem to be very closely related. What happens in the classroom seems to have little value or worth in relationship to the kind of writing that takes place outside the classroom.

Generally, what the majority of these students say they come to this class for is consistent with what the college says that it will provide for them. The key expectations for many of the students is some kind of economic gain. Ivy Tech would certainly agree that it is training its students so that they can be more successful economically. Those individuals who express other literacy goals, those who want to acquire some confidence in their writing, so that they can write stories for their children or learn to write well enough so that they can write novels someday, are expressing goals that in my mind neither really conflict with nor complement Ivy Tech's goals. If the students achieve more than the functional aspects of literacy, currently the college's position seems to be that this expanded literacy is perhaps beneficial to the student, but not the focus of the class (Batzer, Personal Interview). The students who are using literacy for themselves are prescribing to

expressivist, or literacy for personal growth (Knoblauch "Literacy" 78). The college does not seem to be concerned with this personal growth, but it certainly is not opposed to it either.

For most of the students, the approach that I take to teach this class is one that they are not familiar with. One that it will take substantial time for many of them to get comfortable with and one which some of them never do. Marta reminds me throughout the semester that she likes to do worksheets because she understands them, and Carla's end of the semester evaluation, in which she berates me for not including more grammar clearly indicates that she felt short-changed because we did not cover the requisite number of grammar concepts to make this a "real" English class.

Peer Activities

I believe that not only do many of these students upon entering the classroom perceive written literacy to be a fragmented activity, but I also think that they perceive it as an activity that is best done in isolation. This class of students established very good rapport with each other almost immediately. Early class discussions concerning reading and writing in general terms, and discussions about some of the specific readings that the students were doing were lively and spirited with almost every single student participating in each discussion.

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The first group activity that I attempted to do with this class was one that I thought that they would perceive as very non-threatening. I asked the students to gather into small groups and for this first exercise, they chose the groups. They had read a piece about an archeology class in Arizona that was studying people's garbage. The task that I assigned to the groups was to come up with as many examples of non-traditional education that they could. This first assignment went fairly well for all of the groups but one. The one group that had difficulty with the assignment could not get past the idea of whether or not studying garbage was any kind of education. Still I felt confident enough in the way the groups had worked together that I decided to try peer response at the next class session.

For the next class session students were all asked to bring a piece of writing to class that they were going to read to the entire class. After the students read their own writing, their classmates were given 3 x 5 cards and asked to respond to their classmate's writing. I gave them little direction as to what to write on the 3 x 5 cards. I basically asked them to write whatever impressions the writing had on them. Most of the students seemed to really enjoy that class session, and many of them later shared that they had received some very helpful comments from their classmates for revising their writing.

The next activity was peer editing. The students' reactions to the peer editing and the comments that they

offered to their classmates reinforced in my mind the concept that these students are audience aware, and the audience they are aware of is extremely judgmental. Maybe part of the problem with peer editing was the mere fact that it was called "editing." When I had talked with the class about group work, and when I had use the term peer responses, they all seemed relatively comfortable, but when I mentioned peer editing I encountered a great deal of student resistance.

Peer editing is one classroom technique that I have tried to use in all of my basic writing classes. Over the several years that I have used peer editing in the classroom, it has either been a glowing success or a blazing failure. In this class I would say, at least initially, it was more failure than success. Peer editing not working in a classroom is sometimes attributed to the students in the groups not feeling closely connected enough to trust each other (Belenky, et al. 222). I did not anticipate lack of connection being a problem for this class because these students had worked well with each other in different settings. Ponsot and Deen say they have their students read all works to their classes and make comments as a group because inexperienced writers if they read the essay from the page, ". . . are apt to pick out faults in spelling and to speculate about faults in punctuation and paragraphing" (56). This certainly seemed to be the case with this group of students. When they read aloud to each other they

offered comments and observations that were text-related. When they read each other's works, they still made text-related comments, but they also struggled to make comments that they thought were "teacher" comments.

As in other semesters, I introduced peer editing relatively early in the semester. I asked the students to bring to the class a draft of a piece of writing that they were currently in the process of revising for placement in their portfolios. It was my hope that by using peer editing that the students would be able to acknowledge how much they really do know about the language and also gain some confidence in themselves as writers. The instructions that I gave to the students as a class were again rather general, but then I circulated through the classroom while peer editing was taking place and offered more specific guidelines as they were needed. I usually do not give specific guidelines initially because I do not want to prejudice the students' comments to each other. Generally, I tell the students to be sure to share with the author what thoughts the piece evokes, what parts of the piece they think are particularly good and why, and what parts they had difficulty understanding.

Most of the students chose to read their paper to their peer editing groups, rather than to let their partners read them themselves. As mentioned earlier in their responses to each other's writing, they still focused almost exclusively on content. I do not know whether that focus was the result

of the responses that I had been writing to them which had focused mostly on content or not, but I think the modeling probably had some impact.

Carl, a black man in his mid-thirties, who was probably the poorest writer in the class brought this piece for peer editing:

> The Bades teacher I had was my 8 grade teacher she was Bad teacher because I thought she didn't Know How to teach because she was allways saying some bad about someone or talking about someone or call someone a Damme and I not a Damme, one time me and her got in to it and I told har she didn't know how to teach school so then she didn't like me and didn't like her but she could give me a bad grade because I got good grade in her class and I told her she bet not call me a dumme again or call nobody else a dumme because teacher don't do that.

Michael was Carl's editing partner and despite the fact that he had a propensity for big words, he was a much better writer who could have easily decided to point out all of Carl's errors. Instead Michael's peer response focused on the content of Carl's writing:

> Do you think that teachers should be more careful of students feelings? I think that you touched upon a truth; that teachers are able to make mistakes and be wrong like everyone else. Do you feel that when teachers Judge people, or talk down them, that it has a greater impact on people than if someone else did? Do you feel that teachers ought to give students a chance to critique them and give feedback? Do you think your 8th grade teacher learned anything from her talk with you? what do you think you could have done to get her to change her behaviour?

Paula wrote a piece about a teacher who had encouraged her to get her GED after she had been out of school for fourteen years. Maggie wrote on her comments to Paula, "I

think this was really nicely written about your teacher. Was that all that encouraged you was his words? I bet he would be glad to hear this. . . ." Joe wrote about his high school government class which he found frustrating because "The class was conducted in such a difficult manner it was hard to understand." He never fully explains this statement in his writing though and after making this statement, he goes on to summarize a piece he had read about a good teacher. Maggie wrote to him, "Why was your class so frustrated? did your teacher make you feel this way?"

Because the students had responded to each other on the basis of content, and because the class when they did the initial peer editing was lively with conversation, I made the mistaken assumption that peer editing had been a successful venture. However, when I asked the students to tell me in writing, in other words for my eyes only, how they felt about peer editing, I got entirely unexpected reactions.

Most students said they didn't mind sharing their writing, only a few said they tend to "freak out" when they have to share their own writing. So the problem did not stem from hesitations about letting others read their own work--another assumption that I made. If a problem area occurred, I had thought it would stem from a hesitation to share their own writings. Most of them enjoyed reading their partner's writing as well. What they tended to have the most difficulty with was the actual commenting on their

peer's writing. Several students said they felt as though they were supposed to say something negative about their classmate's writing. Since most of them did not like it when others said something negative about their writing, they were very reluctant to write negative comments to someone else, even though they thought that was what was expected of them.

Darlene wrote, "I was alittle nerves I didn't want her to feel like I feel when I receive a response." I think that it is important to note that the responses that she had received thus far were mostly responses I had written, ones that I had thought were very encouraging. This incident reinforced to me once again the importance of not making assumptions about what the students think but listening to them instead.

Others who felt that it was difficult to respond to their classmate's writing because of a fear of negative repercussions were Emma and Marta. Emma wrote, "It was hard to respond to my classmate because I was afraid of that person." Marta, one of the students who never did feel comfortable with the approach of the class, wrote "I had a tuff time writing a response because you don't want them to hate you or get mad at you for making a bunch of remarks about there paper." The same theme is carried through in Melissa's writing, "I wanted to be careful to what I was saying to this person so that it would not sound critical." Two students specifically focused in on their inadequacies

as peer editors, just the opposite of what I wanted them to focus on. Paula wrote, "I might not have interpreted right what they wrote," and Todd who said, "I don't know whether I could response correctly."

Only two students appeared relatively comfortable with the peer editing process. Michael, the budding novelist, felt that peer editing would help him improve his own written communication skills. And Amelia wrote, "...all you have to do is listen to your classmate and response on what s/he said."

The main reason that I use peer editing in the classroom is because I think it is a way that teachers can help students to recognize the power that they do possess over written language. Authors such as Kozol and Freire seem to suggest that teachers cannot empower students. Freire's viewpoint is somewhat different from Kozol's in that he asserts that real learning happens only when those involved in the learning process become teacher/students and student/teachers. Freire emphasizes that, "Authentic education is . . . carried on. . . by 'A' [the teacher] <u>with</u> 'B' [the student]. . ." (82). Kozol is more adamant in his assertions that literacy and freedom are intertwined and that the freedom that comes from literacy is not something that can be given but rather must be taken (93-94). I do not think I am trying to give the students anything in peer group activities, responses, and editing that I do not think that they already possess. What I am trying to get them to

acknowledge is the power they already have. I think these students felt very powerful as they were reading each other's works, but it was not a power that they were comfortable with. Mostly because it seems to be a power that they perceived as having negative rather than positive repercussions.

What do these various predominantly negative reactions tell me about the students' views of written literacy? As I mentioned at the beginning of this section, I think that many of the students see writing as an activity they would prefer to do in isolation, primarily because that is how they have always done it. Although few of the students actually focused on what was wrong with a particular piece of writing, many of the students expected negative responses from their classmates. Thus reinforcing the idea once again that there is a right and wrong way to write and somebody will tell me what is wrong. They were looking again to hear the thunder of the conventions rather than comments that directly concerned the text. In response to their own fears and dread, many of them chose to write comments that did center on the text. Thus at this point in the semester students were still primarily concerned with conventions.

Teacher Responses

Many researchers say that we know what we really think about the teaching of writing by the comments that we record

on student papers. As a result of doing this research, I learned that I am still torn between how I want to respond to student writing and how I sometimes actually do respond to student writing. I also discovered that my responses gave me some insight into both the students' and my views of written literacy. In the past I have found myself swinging back and forth between giving minimal responses and giving elaborate editing suggestions and never quite hitting the stride that I think will most benefit the students. I agree with the contention that "The fear of error is a major cause of anxiety for writing students" (Caywood 74), and that student anxiety can be increased by the way that a teacher responds to student writing (Caywood 68).

I also believe that error is not always an approximation of what students are lacking, but sometimes it is a result of their reaching for the discourse they think is expected of them. Michael had stated in conference that he thought "big" words were usually considered more appropriate than common words when he was writing for a class. In a response to a reading, Michael wrote, ". . . he stated and explored his trepidations regarding his sons vehicular travel and upcoming licensure to drive." I think that this is a perfect example of a student trying to do the kind of writing that he thinks is appropriate, but he only succeeds in obscuring his own meaning.

I decided to respond to the students' daily writings by just supplying them with comments that focused on the ideas

being expressed in the writings. I asked the students to write something for every class session. My intentions were to generate the "raw material" (Ponsot 46) that the students could use as a foundation for future revised writings. I felt it was important for the students to begin writing as soon as possible during the semester and to keep writing throughout the semester. My comments to these daily writings were often formed as statements or ideas that the writing made me think of as I was reading it. I also included in my comments various questions that I hoped would engage the student in further thought about the topic and would help them to refine their presentation of the topic. These daily writings then would fall in the category of the very important thinking-writings. The students would usually write down their thoughts in the order that they occurred to them (Ponsot 105) and usually at the end of the passage determine the idea they were trying to convey. This focus on thinking-writing meant that I also provided them with comments about how to revise the ideas being presented.

The class moved from thinking-writing to telling-writing through the revision process. Telling-writing is revised so that an idea is put forth first and then described as completely as possible--the kind of writing that an experienced writer has learned how to do (Ponsot 106). I also asked the students to choose from these various revised pieces which writings they wanted to be their representative ones for their completed portfolios and

which piece was to be included in a class publication. These thinking and telling writings then were also responded to throughout the course of the semester.

In my efforts to help the students think about and explore their ideas. I always responded to the daily writings with end notes on a separate sheet of paper. In analyzing my end notes, I find they were generally text specific and certainly centered on the student's idea. For example Donald wrote a piece about a fifth grade teacher whom he perceived as especially cruel. He concluded his writing by stating, "She also treated others as escaped convicts, all I was hoping [for] from her daily was a little respect." One of my responses to this sentence was the question, "How important is respect to the learning process?"

From the first set of responses that I wrote, it became evident to me, that most of these students did not seem to expect me to read their writings as carefully as I did or respond to them as thoroughly as I did. Each day I began class by returning the writings from the previous class. Regardless of what activity I asked the students to do as I passed their papers back to them, as soon as they got their papers everything stopped so that they could read the responses. The students immediately would begin to read my comments and most of them would write something in response to them. They would often jot down a few words in response to my comments or questions. The contention that the

students did not expect their writing be to read as carefully as I did was summarized by a comment that surfaced many times throughout the semester: "Thank-you for taking the time to read what I did write."

Approximately four weeks into the semester I asked the students to choose a piece of writing to revise and hand in for evaluation and a letter grade. I also asked the students how they would prefer me to respond to this writing. Would they prefer a continuation of the end marks on separate paper or would they prefer a more traditional approach--margin notes on their papers. When I asked the students this question, I also told them that the responses that I made and the ultimate grades that they received would not vary regardless of the method of response--a statement I soon learned was erroneous.

Only two students indicated a strong preference for me to write on their papers. Both of those students are black females who are thirty-eight years old. Veronica wrote, "Write on my paper," and Emma said, "Yes I want you to write on my paper." Two other students also indicated that they preferred margin notes by granting me permission to write on their papers. Marie, a white female in her late 20s said, "Yes, you <u>may</u> write on my paper (emphasis mine), and Mark, a white male wrote, "You can write on my paper."

Nine students responded by saying that they preferred me to continue writing end marks on separate paper. Seven of the nine students were women, and four of them were

African-American. The only white male in the class who indicated he did not want me to write on his paper indicated by other writings that he had been abused as a child. One African-American female make a point of telling me twice that I was not to write on her paper. I think some of the power that Kozol would want these individuals to claim, they did by making these assertions. When given a choice these students clearly felt that the writing they were doing was not to be violated by having someone else's marks on it. Had I asked them their preference at the beginning of the semester, I do not know if I would have gotten the same responses. I think by this point in time though the students were beginning to assert their independence as writers.

Some of the students responses included the following:

"... I would like it if you would not write on it [my paper] please."

"No, please do not write on my paper..."

"Write on your own piece of paper."

"Write on another paper."

"Please respond on a separate piece of paper. You don't have to correct my punctuation and spelling..."

"I wish that you [would] respond on a different piece of paper."

"Could you please write on a separate piece of paper."

The remaining students in the class never expressed a

preference for method of instructor response.

What do the student preferences mean? First, if literacy is control of written language for a reason, these individuals have become "more" literate, or at least differently literate, because they appear to have taken more control of their writing. Secondly, I speculated about the fact that I had established a certain kind of response pattern by writing on other paper, and I was initially suspicious that perhaps some of the students at might have been expressing an opinion that they thought I preferred. The other side of this argument though, is that the students have participated in enough other English courses, in which the teachers wrote their comments on the student papers that the students did have other experiences of teacher response to compare to this experience. I think the students who did not express an opinion were probably the only ones who may have been responding in the "trying to psyche the teacher out" mode. For the students who expressed a preference for me to write on separate paper, the method of response did seem to be an important issue.

What does it mean that such a small number of students had a preference for the way teachers traditionally mark papers? Certain issues of authority and empowerment have to be at the forefront of any interpretation of my results. If I assume that teachers writing on papers in some way robs students of power over their own writings, then it appears that nine of these students are at least attempting to

reclaim some of the authority that previous teachers have taken from them. What about those who elected writing on their papers though, is it significant that three of the four were women? Were they attaching themselves to what they thought a "graded" paper should be? I also find it somewhat interesting that the only male student who opted for my writing on his paper, did not complete the course. I really do not know the answers to these various questions, but I think that the placement of as well as the content of teacher responses to student writing is extremely significant, and I plan to always ask future students prior to writing on their papers.

Several of the students who said they "didn't care" also indicated though that they would like me to grade "the easiest way." I'm not sure if that means the "easiest" for me the teacher or the easiest in the sense that I was to grade the paper easy, with the fewest marks possible, rather than hard, the proverbial paper that looks as if someone died on it. The students who said my method of response did not matter wrote,

"Do how you want to do it. I'm not picky."

"It doesn't matter how you grade my paper."

"It does not matter to me."

"I don't care.

I elected to continue writing end notes on separate paper if the students expressed no preference.

Another thing I quickly discovered was the falseness of

my own statement to the students that their grades and my comments would be "the same" whether I wrote on their papers or on separate paper. It seems when I was grading the papers of those who preferred margin notes, I tended to grade in my "traditional" English teacher mode. I marked the spelling, punctuation, usage, and other structural errors, but gave only cursory comments to idea development--often in the form of generic phrases such as "more examples here." When I wrote on separate paper, I continued to give feedback in the same mode as the daily responses. I was commenting much more on my understanding of the ideas presented and how the presentation of those idea could be improved. I made very few comments on the "grammatical" aspects of the writings if I wrote end notes. The grammatical errors were an afterthought with one kind of response, idea development was an afterthought with the other. I found that it was easier and faster for me to circle misspelled words than it was to take the time to decipher meaning and provide the kind of suggestions that would help a student to improve the way s/he presented ideas.

It also seemed that no matter how non-threatening I tried to make my responses, many students tended to see them merely as what was wrong with their writing rather than ways to think more about their writing. Carla wrote, "I feel their must be something wrong if you write a long response but, if it a short response I think it must be alright."

Veroncia concurred by stating, ". . .When there are shorter ones [responses] I say maybe I am catching on." Marissa said, "I feel a little embarrassed because my paper may not make any sense." Darlene wrote, "I feel like I'm being picked apart. . .How can I be right or wrong, and by your response I feel like I'm wrong. . . ." Interestingly enough, all of these students quoted above were also those individuals who were the most resistant to peer editing and said that they had a difficult time both sharing their own writing and giving responses to their classmates.

About half of the students (twelve to be exact) said they found my responses to their writing to be positive and beneficial. All of those who found my responses helpful also had previously asked me to write on separate paper or stated it did not matter to them whether I wrote on separate paper or their own. The three people remaining in the class who had asked me to write on their papers, found sharing their writing with their peers difficult. Perhaps the traditional English class, in which the teacher was the only one with the answer, was too much a part of what they thought an English class should be.

Some of the students did appear to read the responses in the way that I hoped they would. Paula wrote, "I like getting your response." Even though Amelia saw the responses as helpful, she also viewed them in terms of correctness. "Those who think they are being picked apart I cannot understand why. Maybe if it was somebody outside of

class looking over a letter or something, but as a class I [don't] feel picked apart at all. As long as I feel that [the] reason for correcting me or analyzing or whatever to my writing are so I can make my writing better and that are not meant for cutting me down, criticizing or picking me apart." Mark wrote, "I like responses. I put effort into my writing and it is nice to know that someone is reading it and giving it thought." Todd wrote, "I feel good about [your] responses. It let's me know whether or not my point got across or not."

I think the student reactions to my comments indicate the way that they have traditionally received teacher comments. They are expecting negative comments, so regardless of the spirit I write the comments in, and regardless of the comments themselves, many of the students are perceiving those comments negatively. Those who are not perceiving any teacher comment as a negative comment may be beginning to move to a different perception of the student teacher relationship in the writing classroom--a shift that may be essential for the writing classroom as I would like it to be, to be successful.

Changes in Perceptions of Written Literacy

Over the course of the semester many of the students seemed to expand their view of what written literacy is. There were three female students in particular who seemed to

move away from a functional view of literacy to a more expressivist one. Knoblauch defines expressivist literacy as literacy for personal growth, and each of these three women felt that she had an important story to tell. All three of them wanted to write something for themselves and their children. One of the women, Marsha, wanted to write a story for each of her three children about some event in their childhood that she felt was significant and which she was sure they probably would not remember because of their ages when these events happened. She wrote these pieces and presented them to her children on Mother's Day. Marsha also chose two of these writings for her portfolio. She wrote,

> The two best pieces in my portfolio are A Real Loss and Motherhood, because these two pieces gave me a chance to really express my inner thoughts on the two events that these articles depected. One of the articles was about my daughter who was 9 at the time. The other was about one of my sons who was 7 months at the time. I really enjoyed writing both of these pieces, the words came easy to put down to paper & play with arranging my thoughts in a way that the reader would enjoy reading about.

Another of the students wanted to write the story of her husband's grandfather who immigrated to the United States in the early 1900s. She told me with about three weeks left in the semester that she had wanted to write his story for a long time, but because it was such an important story for her family, she did not feel she had good enough writing skills to attempt it. She built her confidence up to write that piece for her final writing. The third woman expressed the desire to write some stories for her children.

These students used this class as something beyond learning how to write for college. I think it is important to once again point out that these students had a very specific audience in mind and that they embarked on these pieces of writing because they felt they had something important to say, and that they could say it in writing. These students in my opinion had developed an attitude toward written literacy that was somewhat different from the one they began the class with. Words were now something that they could use for their purposes. Words were no longer an entity that only used them.

Many of the students also seemed to change their attitudes toward revising as the class progressed and they seemed to acknowledge that they were somehow personally vested in the writings that they were submitting. As the semester progressed and various students began to get more comfortable with the feedback that I or their classmates gave them, many of the students began to ask if it would be possible to revise their writings one more time before they submitted it. This group of students was the first group who ever asked me if they could revise a writing again (and again, and again, in some instances!).

Some of the other students in the class may not have felt the same sense of control that the three students mentioned previously did, but they obviously began to see their own writing as more malleable. They were the ones who were determining what the words said, and they could change

the words if they did not like the way the words refined and presented their ideas.

I think a major indication that many of the students had moved away from the perception of good writing as merely correct writing was evidenced by the choices that the students made for a class publication. Ponsot and Deen say that all good writing is personal. Not in the sense that it is necessarily exclusively about the person, but that it is written by a person (104). The students in this class were asked to choose a piece of writing from their portfolios that would be compiled into a class booklet. I like to publish class booklets because I think publishing is another way for the students to see that they are bigger that the words, rather than the other way around. Kozol supports the use of student published materials because, "Those who have seen stories of their own turned into books or booklets . . . are able to some degree to de-mythologize the whole idea of written words" (139).

I asked the students to choose a piece for publication and then also to tell me why they chose that particular piece. Overwhelmingly, they all chose pieces that they felt had an important message for <u>themselves</u>. Not one student cited as the reason that a particular piece was chosen was because it was the best written or that the piece was chosen because it was the one that had received the highest grade. Many of them wrote that their published pieces came from their own experiences.

"I basically can write from what I already know."

"I can really see how involved I got with the writing."

The writing "struck home base."

"I think my best piece was Facing Hard Choices because I knew somebody that had an abortion."

"This writing [on a favorite teacher] was written about a person's life. I have always written better about real experiences."

"It [a piece on child independence] has much sense in the order of how a parent loses control over his/her child. I really like the comparison that I used, the [umbilical] cord compared to the shackles. I surprised myself after I wrote this piece."

In a closely related theme several other students felt that what they had written was not as important for themselves, as it was for someone else to read it.

"I would like you to publish the response on 'Teenage Pregnancys' I believe if people are sexually active they should seek precautions."

"I want you to published 'A Real Loss' because everyone need to know how important it is to child abuse. Why it is important to notice your children and listen to what they say."

"I believe this piece would help other mothers to realize they are not alone when they are dealing with a crisis involving their children."

All of these students in citing their reasons for

choosing certain pieces over others have demonstrated to me that one of my most important objectives for them for this course has been met. They are more in control of their writing and they are more aware of the control that they exhibit over their writing than they appeared to be at the beginning of the course. They also seem to be more vested in the writing that they are doing. The writing matters more to them now than it did to many of them at the beginning of the semester. I do not know if they are more literate, but I do think they are literate in a different way than they were at the beginning of the course.

Finally, of the seventeen students who wrote at the end of the course whether or not they felt the course had helped them, only six of them hung on to the idea of correctness until the very end. These students generally wrote comments that indicated that they now felt more comfortable writing correct papers, and that they were looking forward to applying this new found knowledge to future classes and jobs--the functionalist view. These students clung to their original view of what written literacy was and why it was important. Some of these students indicated to me that they enjoyed the class and they think they learned from it (correctness), but what they think they learned was not what I thought I was teaching.

Three students in particular still hung dearly to their fragmented view of "good" language rather than the holistic view I had tried to promote throughout the semester.

Melissa wrote "This course has allowed me to understand the parts of writing. . ." Maggie wrote ". . .I really learned alot and needed to learn how to write right. . ." Marie stated, "I feel I can write a well structured paper. . ." These individuals are indicating that the primary goals that they accomplished were not my primary goals as an instructor. Do these comments lend credence to the theory that students will sometimes write themselves out of errors, or at least think they have? In Melissa's case, I am not sure. I do not know what parts of writing she thinks she understands because she does not elaborate beyond that statement. I do think that her ability to analyze a piece of text and her ability to produce effective text grew during the course of the semester. Maggie still is not writing things "right," but she developed a strong sense of audience awareness as demonstrated through her comments on portfolio choices.

> My two best pieces of writing are Facing Hard Choices and the one I wrote about my dad, though it isn't written in it's fullest. Facing Hard Choices is one of my good ones because it means something to me and my sister it [her fourteen-year-old sister giving a baby up for adoption] is something that happened in my life. . . .

Even though she may maintain that she merely grew as a correct writer, I think Maggie is beginning to use writing in an expressivist way.

Marie's papers were well-organized from the beginning of the course, so I am not sure exactly what she means by

saying she can now write a well-structured paper. Carla, on the other hand, as mentioned earlier, did not see the class as helping her to meet her educational goals at all. She wrote on her evaluation, "I thought you missed out on a lot of things like verbs, nouns, punctuation, subject and verb agreement their were alot of things I would have liked to gotten to know more about. After all we use those things in everyday life." This evaluation frustrates me and emphasizes the tension between functional views of literacy which seem to be tied to correctness and other views. Those who promote functional literacy often see writing and its value solely in terms of correctness.

The other eleven students who completed end of term evaluations mentioned it was now easier for them to get their ideas down on paper and that they felt better about themselves as individuals as a result of taking the class. A few students also mentioned that they appreciated the opportunity throughout the semester to write creatively--generally considered to be unacceptable behavior in a functionalist world. Obviously those individuals who mention improved self feelings as a result of their writing, could be classified under Knoblauch's definition of expressivist/personal-growth literacy, but I am not sure if I can categorize those who just say that they are now able to sort out their ideas better in writing. Depending on the kinds of ideas that they are referring to, they could conceivably fall in to any one of Knoblauch's categories.

## CONCLUSIONS--WRITTEN LITERACY AT IVY TECH

What is written literacy at Ivy Tech? One of the most frustrating parts of doing this research was not that there is no single definition, I did not expect to find one, but rather that the definitions were changing so dramatically as I wrote them. I am currently attending curriculum reform meetings at our central office. During nearly every meeting I was discovering more information that added to and changed the definitions I was trying to write. One of the most important points that I have returned to in the research is that literacy is never neutral--it is always literacy for a purpose (Kozol 187, Knoblauch "Literacy" 75).

In my original proposal I stated that one of the reasons I choose a career in education was because I wanted to effect change. My original goal was to help change the students and they were still the recipient of change that I had in mind as I began my research and wrote that statement. What I have discovered though is that I want to change the institution perhaps as much as I want to change the students. The institution is struggling to define what literacy is for itself. The college has demonstrated by the choices that it is making that it does not value literacy in the same ways that I value it and the ways I would like to see it valued in my classroom. If functionalist language is somehow correct language, and the two seem inextricably connected to all those I spoke with, I need to somehow

change the institution so that other kinds of language and other kinds of language experiences are also valued. These are the changes I have already begun to bring about on a departmental level as I have trained teachers to use process approach and selected textbooks for courses that reflect a more holistic approach to writing.

Much of my future teaching though will be directed towards the institution rather than its students. One of the key things I need to convince my various co-workers of is that grammar and correctness are means to an end and not an end in themselves. I also need to convince them that by emphasizing correctness as the only significant value of writing, they are essentially hampering the kinds of critical thinking and analyzing that they profess they want students to be able to do. If an over-emphasis on correctness hampers the composing process, as I believe it does, then students who focus on surface level construction and convention during every stage of their writing are essentially unable to extract those deeper level thoughts and thought processes.

Fragmented skills that can be assessed and objectively certified on multiple choice tests are not the most valuable kinds of language experiences in a writing classroom. I need to let other teachers and administrators know that the kinds of writing that the students are doing and the kinds of questions they are asking each other and I am asking them, are questions that lead to much more sophisticated

thinking and learning than merely filling in grammar worksheets does. I need to somehow let them know that I am not opposed to "correct" writing, something that I am often accused of when I discuss approaching writing from a process perspective, but that correctness in and of itself does not necessitate good writing. I also want my various co-workers to recognize that correctness of the writing often has little to do with whether or not a piece of writing is significant to either the writer or the reader.

I no longer find it surprising that I often find myself in conflict with the views of the college. The literacies that I find most important to me as an individual and a teacher are expressivist literacy and critical literacy. I encourage the students in my classes to use writing as a way to grow personally, and this last semester, I think at least three of them began to use their literacy in this way. The characteristic that sets critical literacy apart from the others is that it is a literacy that encourages the questioning of the system, perhaps in order to change it. It is almost impossible to assume any students acquired this level of critical literacy spring semester 1992, but I think many of them will be able to move in that direction if they continue to question and probe as they began to in basic writing. I certainly have honed my own critical literacy skills as a result of this research and their questions and comments.

The only constant in the various definitions of

literacy is that literacy is sought after for the control that it gives the individuals who possess it. Their desires for control and the reasons they want the control are the two things that must be continually assessed in any definition of written literacy. When I first began teaching at Ivy Tech, I constantly felt at odds with what I perceived to be the institution's and the students' expectations of me and the writing courses and my expectations of myself and those same courses. Over the several years I have taught at the college and have grappled with these issues, I would alternately feel comfortable and then uncomfortable with the concept of functionalist literacy. I finally resigned myself to some degree that functional literacy wasn't necessarily a "bad" literacy, but in my mind and in my classroom it certainly wasn't enough.

I see functionalist literacy as perhaps a beginning position for many individuals, but I do not see it as an ending one. I have tried to convince myself and others that if I promoted other kinds of literacy in the classroom, that my students could perhaps use those other literacies in the functionalist sense as well. After researching various literacies and asking the students themselves, however, I am no longer sure I believe that statement. As long as Ivy Tech and students like Carla, who think I short-changed her education by not spending time talking about nouns and verbs and other things she uses in everyday life, cling to the concept that to understand the parts is to understand the

whole, and the constantly accompanying viewpoint that the only good writing is correct writing, they will be promoting literacies that are inadequate. I will continue to confront them and to try to demonstrate to them, administrators, teachers, and students, the value of other literacies.

## Notes

[1]Student writing has been reproduced exactly as it was written.

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# VITA

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CAREER OBJECTIVE:
Provide opportunities for students considered at risk.

EDUCATION:
Master of Liberal Studies, Indiana University South Bend, South Bend, IN, Emphasis on Literature and Composition, December 1992.

Bachelor of Arts, Montana State University, Bozeman, MT, English literature with a teaching option, Minor in Social Studies (History, Political Science). June 1980.

EMPLOYMENT AND WORK EXPERIENCE:
Indiana Vocational Technical College (IVTC), Northcentral, South Bend, Indiana, Coordinator of Communications and Mathematics, August 1991 to present. College duties include curriculum reform, hiring, training, and supervising associate faculty, teaching basic skills advancement courses, coordinating grant programs. Coordinated education component of Summer Youth Employment Grant 1986, project director for Student Literacy Corps Grant, August 1992 to present. Implemented using portfolios to teach writing in all basic writing courses.

IVTC, Teacher. February 1984 to August 1991. Taught composition courses at the basic skills and general education levels, business communications, and speech.

Froid Public Schools, Froid, Montana. August 1981 to May 1983. Taught sophomore, junior, and senior high school English. Duties also included being high school speech coach, (coached state championship Class C team 1982), advisor to student newspaper, director of school plays, yearbook advisor, junior class advisor, and youth legislature advisor.

PAPERS PRESENTED AT PROFESSIONAL MEETINGS:
"Ways to Teach Academically Underprepared Students." Presented at the Indiana Adult Literacy Coalition Conference, Indianapolis, Indiana, June 1992 (with Al Travers).
"Transfer of Learning." Presented at the Indiana Association for Developmental Education, Indianapolis, Indiana, October 1989.

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE:

Data collection for Master's Thesis included classroom research. Participants were students enrolled in basic writing course. Faculty Advisor: Dr. Mary Ann Cain, 1992.

Conducted Classroom research to write case studies of basic writing students' composing process. Participants were student volunteers enrolled in basic writing courses. Faculty Advisor: Dr. Mary Ann Cain, Spring 1992.

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS:

National Council of Teachers of English
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INTERESTS:

Reading, Theatre, Sports, Knitting, Needlework.